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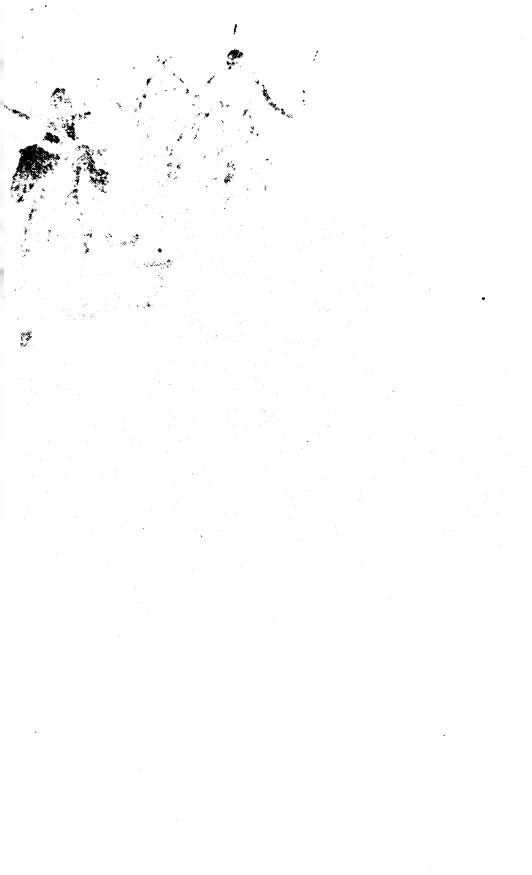
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## **ADVENTURES IN MEXICO**

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ADVENTURES IN  
MEXICO

By GEORGE FREDERICK RUXTON

Author of "In the Old West"

From Vera Cruz to Chihuahua in  
the Days of the Mexican War

EDITED BY

HORACE KEPHART



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## INTRODUCTION

The first volume of this Library of Adventure was a description of trapper life in "The Old West" by George Frederick Ruxton. The author of that remarkable book made the second of his three visits to America in 1846-47, this time landing at Vera Cruz, and travelling on horseback from the city of Mexico northward to Santa Fé, about 2,000 miles as the trail bore. He then pushed on to the Rocky Mountains, where he lived the life of a free hunter until it was time to return to England, which he did by way of St. Louis and New York. In the spring of 1848 he published a narrative of his adventures that was pronounced by the most exacting of London critics "one of the most fascinating volumes which of late years has issued from the press."

Ruxton arrived at Vera Cruz in August, 1846, and proceeded by way of Jalapa to the city of Mexico. From a mysterious allusion that he makes in his preface to the circumstances under which he determined to traverse the war-torn republic, and from the cordiality with which he was received by Mexican officials — at times they even

furnished him a military escort — one may guess that he had a mission of more consequence than merely to satisfy a thirst for adventure; but, if so, its object has never been revealed.

After staying in the capital a few days, Ruxton set forth on a long horseback journey to the northward. Mexico was a particularly dangerous country to explore. Its highways were infested with robbers almost to the portals of the capital. The northern region was overrun by hostile Indians. To make matters worse, Mexico was engaged in war with the United States, and every English-speaking person coming into the country was taken for "a Texan, a Yankee, a jackass," to be treated accordingly. More than once Ruxton's own life was put in peril by his being mistook for one of those *malditos Americanos*.

The route at first followed the mountains, as the rainy season had set in covering the plains with water; but soon it was found practicable to descend into the charming champaign of the Rio Lerma. Passing along the edge of the upheaved volcanic region of Jorullo, Ruxton arrived at Querétaro without any incident more exciting than his "standing off" a band of highwaymen. Through the plains of Silao to Zacatecas, and by way of Fresnillo, he reached Durango, the Ultima Thule of "civilized" Mexico.

Finding nobody else who dared accompany him into the wild, Indian-haunted country beyond Durango, he had to put up with a known ruffian as his Sancho Panza. Scarcely had they made a good start before this worthy tried to assassinate his employer that he might make off with the animals and outfit. Ruxton, instead of being dismayed at this unauspicious beginning of their acquaintanceship, thrust a pistol in the fellow's face, disarmed him, flogged him into submission, and then made him proceed to carry out his contract as guide and servant. All the way to Chihuahua the days were full of anxieties, and the nights gave constant practice in the art of "sleeping with one eye open."

Having passed through this desolate and savage land, which to Europeans was known only as a blank spot on the map, the adventurer reached Chihuahua in November, none the worse for hardships of the trail, but rather stimulated to go on and finish the task he had set himself to perform.

At Chihuahua we leave him, for the present; for, although still a long way from the United States boundary line, he now began to encounter Americans, and the narrative assumes another aspect. How he continued his perilous *jornadas*, and what adventures befel him as a mighty hunter in the Far West, will be told in the next volume of this

Library, under title of "Wild Life in the Rocky Mountains."

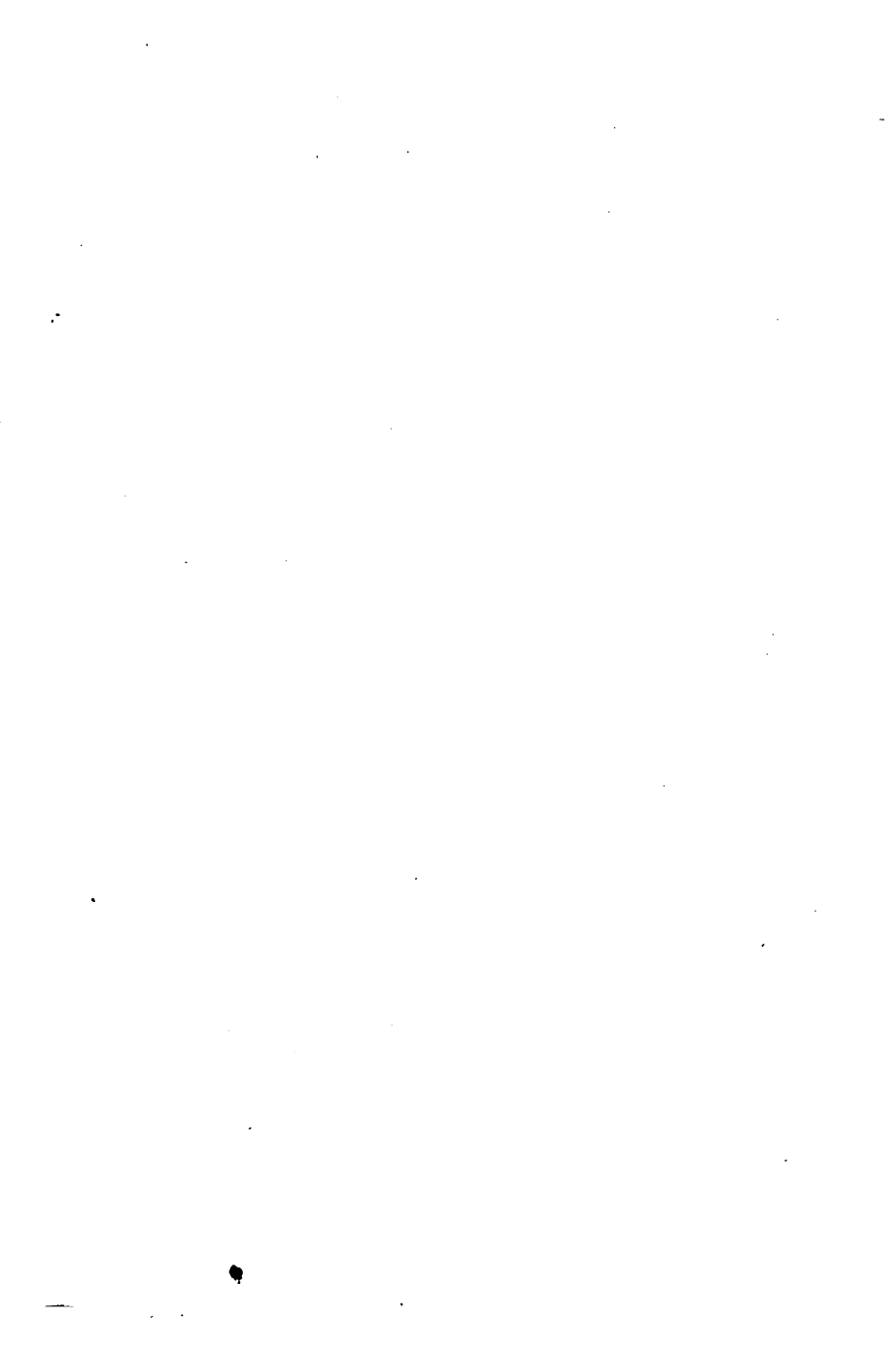
Our author belonged to that picked company of born explorers who not only know how to observe but how to fare in wild regions and to endure. Nothing came amiss: he was equally at home in mansion or hovel, or bedded on the bare earth of a cold and wind-swept plain. He was, too, a citizen of the world, with a happy aptitude for assimilating with any company that chance might offer. Tactful but dauntless, he could go anywhere—alone if need be—and "get through." Nothing escaped his shrewd powers of observation, to which were joined a knack of vivid description and a hearty sense of humor that enliven every situation in which he was thrown. There was a hard vein in him, however, like that which showed in nearly all our old frontiersmen (we wish he had not kicked the crippled lepero, or expressed regret at not having killed the unsuspecting Comanche chief), but that very hardness was often priceless amid the dangers and difficulties that beset his path.

Ruxton wrote without prejudice, except where Spanish priests were concerned, yet his picture of average Mexican character is a sombre one. His reflections on the character and institutions of Mexico are peculiarly apposite to events of the

present-day. Up to the time of his visit this unhappy country had suffered two hundred and thirty-seven revolutions! It reminds one of what is related by the Spanish poet Quevedo, who, so he says, having descended into hell on a tour of inspection, asked to see the place appropriated to kings. He was shown a small apartment tenanted by only a few wretched spirits. On his remarking that there did not appear to be many of them, the attendant demon indignantly replied, "Fool! these are all that ever *reigned*."

In the present edition of Ruxton's book, translations of Spanish words and phrases have been added where they did not occur in the original, and the Spanish, if not anglicised, has been italicised throughout, instead of being printed sometimes in italics but oftener in Roman characters, as in the English edition. The text is given in full, with no changes but the necessary corrections, and the elision of a few paragraphs, that add nothing to the interest of the work.

HORACE KEPHART.



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Some apology, I am aware, is necessary for offering so meagre an account of Mexico as that which is set before the reader in the following pages. In justice to myself, however, I may state that all the notes and memoranda of the country I passed through, as well as several valuable and interesting documents and MSS. connected with the history of Northern Mexico and its Indian tribes, which I had collected, were unfortunately destroyed (with the exception of my rough note-book) in passing the Pawnee Fork of the river Arkansas, as I have mentioned in the body of this narrative;\* and this loss has left me no alternative but to give a brief outline of my journey, which, bare as it may be, I prefer to lay before the reader in its present shape, rather than draw at hazard from the treacherous note-book of memory, or the less reliable source of a fertile imagination.

It is hardly necessary to explain the cause of my visiting Mexico at such an unsettled period;

\* See Chapter XIV of the next volume of this series, "Wild Life in the Rocky Mountains." (*Ed.*)

and I fear that circumstances will prevent my gratifying the curiosity of the reader, should he feel any on that point.

This little work is merely what its title professes it to be, "The Rough Notes of a Journey through Mexico, and a Winter spent amongst the wild scenes and wilder characters of the Rocky Mountains," and has no higher aim than to give an idea of the difficulties and hardships a traveller may anticipate, should he venture to pass through it and mix with its semi-barbarous and uncouth people, and to draw a faint picture of the lives of those hardy pioneers of civilization whose lot is cast upon the boundless prairies and rugged mountains of the Far West.

With a solitary exception I have avoided touching upon American subjects; not only because much abler pens than mine have done that country and people more or less justice or injustice, and I wish to attempt to describe nothing that other English travellers have written upon before, and to give a rough sketch of a very *rough* journey through comparatively new ground — but, more than all, for the reason that I have, on this and previous visits to the United States, met with such genuine kindness and unbounded hospitality from all classes of the American people, both the richest



and the poorest, that I have not the heart to say one harsh word of them or theirs, even if I could or would.

Faults the Americans have — and who have not? But they are, I maintain, failings of the head and not the heart, which nowhere beats warmer, or in a more genuine spirit of kindness and affection, than in the bosom of a citizen of the United States.

Would that I could say as much of the sister people. From south to north I traversed the whole of the Republic of Mexico, a distance of nearly two thousand miles, and was thrown amongst the people of every rank, class, and station; and I regret to have to say that I cannot remember to have observed one single commendable trait in the character of the Mexican; always excepting from this sweeping clause the women of the country, who, for kindness of heart and many sterling qualities, are an ornament to their sex, and to any nation.

If the Mexican possess one single virtue, as I hope he does, he must keep it so closely hidden in some secret fold of his *sarape* as to have escaped my humble sight, although I travelled through his country with eyes wide open, and for conviction ripe and ready. I trust, for his sake, that he will speedily withdraw from the bushel the solitary

light of his concealed virtue, lest before long it be absorbed in the more potent flame which the Anglo-Saxon seems just now disposed to shed over benighted Mexico.

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Others again were homeward bound, delighted to turn their backs on the suicidal mists of the isle of vapors, and revelling in anticipated enjoyment of the fiery paradise beyond the sea. Red and swollen eyes, however, were in a decided majority; and as the steam hissed and snorted, so did faces become more elongated, and the corners of mouths take a downward angle.

At length the ominous bell gave notice that the moment of parting had arrived. Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, and lovers with quivering lip, for the last time embraced; the tender cast off her hawser, and the huge steamer was speeding on her way. And now solitary figures with swollen eyes leaned over the taffrail, gazing intently towards the land, and at the little speck dancing on the waves, which was bearing so quickly away loved objects, seen by many of them for the last time.

Our passengers comprised a motley group: Creoles of the West India islands and the main, Spaniards of Havana, French of Martinique and Gaudaloupe, Danes of St. Thomas, Dutch of Curaçoa, Portuguese of Madeira, Jamaica Jews, merchants of Costa Rica, military officers, and emigrating Yorkshire farmers, were amongst the various items of the human freight.

However, forty-eight hours' shaking together

amalgamated the mass; and when that number of hours and a southerly course had carried us into a smooth sea and heavenly climate, all sorrows were for the time forgotten. A Jamaica Jew had taken up a position on the cabin skylight, where, with a pack of cards and a pile of gold before him, he every day, and all day long, officiated as *dueño* of a *monté*-table; a little Rabbi, throwing aside his sacerdotal cares, and shining in glossy black, superintending the receipts and disbursements of the bank. The *provideur*, who by the way was the life of the ship, was already chalking on the deck a marine billiard-table; and under his direction and tuition, English and French, Spaniards and Dutch, were soon engaged in momentous matches, on which depended many a bottle of iced champagne.

These amusements, combined with a vast deal of eating, drinking, and smoking, fortunately preserved us in good humor for six days; when, just as shovel-board had lost its charms, champagne its flavor, and the *monté* Israelite his customers, the welcome cry of "Land ho!" at midnight on the 12th, turned out all hands on deck; and there, looming in the misty distance on our starboard bow, lay Puerto Santo, part and parcel of "soft" Madeira.

When I rose the next morning we were standing

into Funchal Roads, and shortly after came to anchor within three-quarters of a mile of the shore and opposite the town of Funchal. At this distance the island, rising to a great elevation from the water's edge, with the town, washed by the Atlantic, at its base, and innumerable white houses, with here and there a convent's spires, dotted up the sides, resembles a scene of a gigantic panorama, with every object so clearly displayed to the eye, and fore and back ground of deep-blue sky and azure sea.

On landing in one of the country boats, as soon as the keel had touched the beach, a cavalcade of horsemen, mounted on handsome active ponies, charged to the very water's edge, and, nearly trampling us in their furious onslaught, reined up suddenly, bringing their steeds on their haunches. Our first thought was instant flight; but, finding their object was pacific, we learned that this Arab-like proceeding was for the purpose of displaying the merits of their cattle, and to tempt us to engage in an equestrian expedition up the mountain. Selecting three promising-looking animals, and preceded by their funnel-capped proprietors as guides, we proceeded to the town.

Funchal in no degree differs from any sea or river side town in Portugal. The Funchalese are Portuguese in form and feature; the women, if

possible, more ordinary, and the beggars more importunate and persevering. The beach is covered with plank sleds, to which are yoked most comical little oxen no larger than donkeys. In these sleds the hogsheads of wine are conveyed to the boats, as they are better adapted to the rough shingle than wheeled conveyances. To a stranger the trade of the town appears to be monopolised by vendors of straw hats and canary-birds. These articles of merchandise are thrust into one's face at every step. Sombreros are pounded upon your head; showers of canaries and goldfinches, with strings attached to their legs, are fired like rockets into your face; and the roar of the salesmen deafens the ear.

Ascending the precipitous *ruas* [roads], we soon reach the suburbs, our guides holding on by the tails of the horses to facilitate their ascent. Still mounting, we pass where vines are trellised over the road; sweet-smelling geraniums, heliotrope, and fuchsias overhang the garden-walls on each side; whilst, in the beautiful little gardens which everywhere meet the eye, the graceful banana, the orange-tree and waving maize, the tropical aloe and homely oak, form the most pleasing contrasts and enchant the sight. Winding still up the mountain-side, the interminable stone-paved suburb is passed; but even whilst toiling over the

uneven slippery pavement, and sitting in an almost vertical saddle, hanging on to the mane like grim death, it is impossible to whisper an imprecation, everything around is so soft and pleasing; and, *malgré lui*, one (even if he be an Englishman) has not the heart to growl or complain.

Here the vivid colorings of a tropical scene blend in harmony with the sober tints of a more temperate landscape. By the orange and leaf-spreading banana grow the oak and apple; the cactus and the daisy bloom together; the luscious pine and humble potato yield their fruit; and, side by side with the golden-colored canary, the robin redbreast warbles his sweet and well-known song.

The sides of the mountain are clothed with vines, and numerous streamlets trickle along the roadside, cooling the air with their refreshing murmurs; whilst a mountain torrent here and there forces its impetuous way. The paths which wind along the mountain overhang precipices lined with foliage, and water everywhere glitters through the verdure and relieves the eye. In the valleys are seen delicious nooks, green and cool, shadowed by the lofty rocks, with picturesque cottages and smiling gardens, and scenes of such quiet beauty as one never tires to gaze upon. Turning in your saddle, you see the town of Funchal at your feet, reflected in the smooth and glittering sea. The



vessels in the roads appear no larger than fishing-boats; and the huge steamer, lying lazily at her anchor, will be the victim of a malediction, that it is so soon to bear you away from this sweet island.

The sun too is not the fireball of the tropics, or even the heat-engendering luminary we have left behind us, but shines faintly bright through a dim soft mist; and while sweet-smelling flowers dispense their odors around, and the notes of song-birds are heard on every side, the air breathes soft and soothingly. . . .

On leaving Madeira we had thirteen days of most monotonous steaming, during which a most universal *ennui* prevailed on board, relieved occasionally by the outbreakings of some wooer of the fickle goddess, whose winnings or losings had been more than usually great, and consequently occasioned a greater or less amount of self-gratulation or excitement. When every mortal means of amusement was supposed to have been exhausted, it was providentially discovered that the Rabbi was in the habit of slaying with his own hand, and according to the strict letter of the Mosaic law, the ducks, fowls, and sheep which he desired to devour.

The day after the discovery the butcher was seen to approach the Rabbi with some mysterious communication, who immediately tucked up his

sleeves, took a knife which was handed to him by the butcher, and accompanied that functionary to the hen-coops.

In an instant the quarter-deck was deserted; every passenger stealthily took up a position where he could witness the mysterious catastrophe. The Rabbi, with upturned wristbands, carefully kneaded the breasts of several fowls which were offered to his knife by the butcher, and at length, selecting one whose condition was undeniable, casting up his eyes and invoking Moses to give him the requisite nerve, he administered the mystic stab, and instantly retreated. As a reward for the excitement he had caused, I noticed that at dinner that day the Rabbi received most friendly offers of ham and roast pork.

On the thirteenth morning after leaving Madeira the low regular outline of Barbadoes was visible on the horizon. This island exhibits less tropical scenery than any other in the West Indies, being less mountainous, and the plains and hills cultivated in every part, and consequently the bush is cleared off to make way for agricultural improvements. It is not, however, the less beautiful on this account; and everywhere the snug-looking houses of the planters, with mills and sugar-houses, and all the appliances of thriving plantations, were seen as we hugged the shore,

On landing I found myself, very fortunately and unexpectedly, amongst many old friends, whose hospitality I enjoyed during my stay at the island. . . .

I found nothing striking in Barbadoes but the sun, which is a perpetual furnace, and the pepper-pot — a dish to the mysteries of which I was initiated here for the first time. It is a delicious compound of flesh, fish, and fowl, piqué with all the hot peppers and condiments the island produces, and mystified in a rich black sauce. The flavor of this wonderful dish is impossible to describe. Imagine a mass of cockroaches stewed in pitch, and a faint idea may be had of the appearance and smell of the savory compound.

Of Bridgetown, the capital, the less said the better. It is infested with a most rascally and impudent race of negroes, who almost resort to violence to wrench unwilling pistareens from the stranger's pocket. Just before my arrival half the town had most providentially been destroyed by fire, so that, if rebuilt, hopes are entertained of a more respectable-looking place being erected,

## CHAPTER II

### THE EVER-FAITHFUL ISLE

**T**HE next island touched at was Grenada, one of the most picturesque of the Antilles. The little harbor is completely land-locked, and, as it were, scooped out of the side of the mountain, which rises from the water's edge. An old green fort, perched upon a crag, commands the anchorage, and the little town, interspersed with palm-trees and aloes, appears to be crawling up the mountain. Here we remained but a few hours, and steered thence to San Domingo, one of the largest of the group. Coasting along, it presented a bold imposing outline of rugged mountains covered with forests, and but little appearance of cultivation. Staying but a few hours at Jacmel, to receive and deliver mails, we soon came in sight of Jamaica, with its fine bold scenery of mountain and valley; and threading the intricate and dangerous reefs, and passing the forts and batteries of Port Royal, we anchored about noon off Kingston, the chief town of the island.

Here we left the greater part of our fellow-pas-

sengers, including the card-playing Jew and the Rabbi. The former left the steamer minus several hundred pounds by his *monté* speculation, the greater part of which had been won by two boys from Birmingham, who were on their way to Havana to set up a cooperage. Elated with their (to them) enormous gains, they, in honor of the occasion, sacrificed too freely to the rosy god, the consequence of which was that in a few weeks both were carried off by the relentless *vomito*.

A couple of days spent amongst the killbucra \* and sopilotes \* of Uppark rendered my regret at leaving Jamaica anything but poignant; and taking leave of the dusty dirty town of Kingston, with its ruinous houses and miserable population, in a few days we were coasting along the south side of Cuba, passing Cape Antonio and the Isle of Pines, once famous, or rather infamous, as the resort of pirates, who infested these seas until within a few years, and still the rendezvous of equally nefarious slavers.

La Havana — the Haven — is one of the finest harbors in the world, and capable of holding a thousand vessels. It is completely land-locked, and the entrance so narrow that vessels must pass within musket-shot of the "Morro," whose frown-

\* A yellow flower, which is said to be more abundant during sickly seasons. The sopilote is the turkey-buzzard.

ing batteries look down on the very decks. Besides the Morro, the formidable batteries of the Principe and La Cabaña show their teeth on each side, and numerous detached works crown every eminence.

The Spaniards may well be jealous of Cuba, which, with their usual *fanfaron* (just, however, in this case), they style "*La joya mas brillante en la corona de España*, the most brilliant jewel in the crown of Spain." This, the last of their once magnificent dependencies, they may well guard with watchful eye; for not only do the colonists most cordially detest the mother country, and only wait an opportunity to throw off the yoke, but already an unscrupulous and powerful neighbor "of the north" casts a longing eye towards this rich and beautiful island.

The cruel dissensions and bloody revolutions which have so long convulsed unfortunate Spain have seldom extended their influences to this remote colony. Cuba, content in her riches and prosperity, has looked calmly on, indifferent to the throes which have agonized the maternal frame. Her boastful sobriquet, "*Siempre fiel isla de Cuba* — the ever-faithful island of Cuba" — has thus been cheaply earned, and passively retained by the ironical Havaneros, who will assuredly one day pluck out from the Spanish crown this "fine

jewel," or suffer it to be transferred to a foreign bonnet.

The harbor has been so often described that it is needless to dilate upon its beauties. In one corner is a rank mangrove swamp which exhales a fatal miasma, and which, wafted by the land-breeze over the town and shipping, is one great cause of the deplorable mortality which occurs here in the sickly season. Havana is quite a Spanish town, and reminded me of Cadiz more than any other. It is, however, cleaner and better regulated, with a very efficient police. The streets are narrow, as they ought to be in hot countries, and towards the evening thronged with volantes, a light spider-like carriage peculiar to Cuba, freighted with black-eyed beauties on their way to the paseo, shopping, or to Dominica's, the celebrated *neveria* or ice-shop, where they very properly pull up "*a refrescar un tantito* — to cool the courage" — before "showing" on the excitable paseo.

From seven to ten the Paseo Tacon is thronged, and a stranger had better pause before he runs the gauntlet of such batteries of eyes and fans as he never before, in his northern philosophy, thought or dreamed of. The ladies dress in white, with their beautiful hair unsacrificed by bonnet, and, if ornamented, by a simple white or red rose,

*à la moda Andaluza*. However perfect may be their figures, you see them not. One's gaze is concentrated in their large lustrous eyes, which, when you get within their reach, swallow you up as the sun swallows a comet when he is rash enough to approach too near, throwing you out again, a burnt-up cinder, to be resuscitated and reburned by the next eyes which pass. The Havaneras certainly surpass the Spaniards in the beauty of their eyes, if that be possible.

With their eyes and *abanicos* (fans) the Havaneras have no need of tongues; which, however, they can use on emergencies. Whereas every pretty woman can in some degree "make the eyes speak," no other than a Spanish beauty can use a fan. This is to them the *idioma de amor* — the language of love. Assisted by the eye it is eloquence itself, and in the hands of a coquette, like a gun in the hands of a careless boy, is a most dangerous weapon. To *see* this language spoken in perfection, visit the theatre Tacon, which by the way is the prettiest theatre in the world. Here, between the acts, nothing is heard but the clicking of fans, whilst cross fires of lightning-glances pierce one through and through. The front of the boxes in the Tacon is of light open work, through which the light dresses of the ladies are seen, and which has a very pretty effect. Unlike



the boxes of our opera, which invidiously conceal all but the beauties "above the zone," here the whole figure, simply draped in white is fully displayed. Foreigners say that an Englishwoman should never be seen but in an opera-box; and the Spaniards affirm that, whereas an "Englishwoman should be seen at the window, and a Frenchwoman promenading, the gods have vouchsafed that a Spaniard may be looked at everywhere:" "*La Ynglesa en la ventana, la Francesca paseandose, la Española, por onde se quiere.*"

Three miles from Havana is *El Cerro*, where the wealthy merchants have their country seats, and resort with their families during the sickly season. The fronts of these houses are completely open, save by light bars, so that at night, when lighted up, the whole interior is perfectly displayed. Night is the fashionable time for visiting; and through this open birdcage-work may be seen a formal row of males *in front* of the ladies, for here, in this excitable climate, it is deemed imprudent to bring into actual contact such substances as flint and steel, or fire and tow.

After four days' stay in Havana, I again embarked on board the steamer, and in such a storm of thunder and rain as I shall never forget. I engaged a shore-boat manned by two mulattos, and before we could reach the steamer the hurricane

broke upon us. The lightning appeared actually to rain down, the flashes being incessant, whilst the rain descended with such violence as nearly to fill and swamp the boat. The boatmen swore and cursed, and crouched under the thwarts; the sail and mast were blown clean away; and for more than an hour we were unable to face the storm. At length, taking advantage of a lull, we managed to reach the vessel, and after a vexatious delay of several hours got under weigh.

On passing the Morro, we were hailed and ordered to bring to, whilst, at the same moment, a boat, with a corporal and three men, put off from the castle, and boarded us. We had on board a great number of passengers on their way to Mexico, and many were probably leaving Cuba without the necessary passport, so that, on the arrival of the boat, many olive-colored gentlemen with moustaches dived suddenly below, being seized with a sudden desire to explore the hold and other cavernous portions of the ship. However, in a few minutes all the passengers were mustered on deck by the captain, and their names called. As one unlucky Spaniard answered to his name, the corporal stepped up to him, laying his finger on his shoulder, with "*En el nombre del gobernador* — in the name of the governor." "*A su disposicion, amigo* — at your service, friend" — answered the

captured one, and, quietly lighting his cigar, descended into the guard-boat with his trunk, *en route* to the dungeons of the Morro. "*Viva!*" exclaimed the Spaniards: "*maldito sea el déspota* — curse the despot"; and, breathing freely, relighted their puros, and indulged in a little abuse of their colonial government.

The day after our departure from Havana we overtook a small steamer under the British flag, which was pronounced to be the *Arab*, having on board the ex-President of Mexico, General Santa Anna. As she signalled to speak, we bore down upon her, and, running alongside, her captain hailed to know if we would take on board four passengers; which was declined, our skipper not wishing to compromise himself with the American blockading squadron at Vera Cruz, by carrying Mexican officers. We had a good view of Santa Anna, and his pretty young wife, who, on hearing our decision, stamped her little foot on the deck, and turned poutingly to some of her suite. It seemed that the *Arab* had disabled her machinery, and was making such slow progress that Santa Anna was desirous of continuing the trip in the *Medway*. He was provided with a passport from the government of the United States to enable him to pass the blockade; which very questionable policy on the part of that government it is difficult

to understand; since they were well aware that Santa Anna was bitterly hostile to them, whatever assurances he may have made to the contrary; and at the same time was perhaps the only man whom the Mexican army would suffer to lead them against the American troops.

On the fifth morning after leaving Havana, at 6 A. M., we made the land, and were soon after boarded by one of the American blockading squadron — the corvette *St. Mary's*. It was expected that Santa Anna was on board, and the officer said that instructions had been received to permit him to enter Vera Cruz.

At 7 we passed the castle of San Juan de Ulloa, and anchored off the city of the True Cross, or, as it is often and most aptly called "*La Ciudad de los Muertos*" — The City of the Dead.

## CHAPTER III

### FIRST GLIMPSE OF MEXICO

**V**ERA CRUZ derives its name from the first city built on this continent by Cortes, in 1519-20. *La villa rica de la Vera Cruz* — the rich city of the True Cross — was situated a few miles to the north-east of the present city, and was built by the conquistador as a garrison on which to fall back, in case his expedition into the interior proved a failure.

From the sea the coast on each side the town presents a dismal view of sandhills, which appear almost to swallow up the walls. The town, however, sparkling in the sun, with its white houses and numerous church-spires, has rather a picturesque appearance; but every object, whether on sea or land, glows unnaturally in the lurid atmosphere. It is painful to look into the sea, where shoals of bright-colored fish are swimming; and equally painful to turn the eyes to the shore, where the sun, refracted by the sand, actually scorches the sight, as well as pains it by the quivering glare which ever attends refracted light.

The city is well planned, surrounded by an adobe wall, with wide streets crossing each other at right angles. There are also several large and handsome buildings fast mouldering to decay. One hundred years ago a flourishing commercial city, like everything in Spanish America, it has suffered from the baneful effects of a corrupt, impotent government. Now, with a scanty population, and under the control of a military despotism, its wealth and influence have passed away. The aspect of the interior of the town is dreary and desolate beyond description. Grass grows in the streets and squares; the churches and public buildings are falling to ruins: scarcely a human being is to be met, and the few seen are sallow and lank, and skulk through the streets as if fearing to encounter, at every corner, the personification of the dread *vomito*, which at this season (August) is carrying off a tithe of the population. Everywhere stalks the *sopilote* (turkey-buzzard), sole tenant of the streets, feeding on the garbage and carrion which abound in every corner.

The few foreign merchants who reside there, remove their families to Jalapa in the season of the *vomito*, and all who have a few dollars in their pockets betake themselves to the temperate regions. The very natives and negroes are a cadaverous stunted race; and the dogs, which contend

in the streets with the sopilotes for carrion, are the most miserable of the genus cur. Just before my window one of these curs lay expiring in the middle of the street. As the wretched animal quivered in the last gasp, a sopilote flew down from the church-spire, and, perching on the body, commenced its feast. It was soon joined by several others, and in five minutes the carcass was devoured. These disgusting birds are, however, useful scavengers, and, performing the duty of the lazy Mexicans, are therefore protected by law.

The town still presents numerous souvenirs of the bombardment by the warlike De Joinville in 1839. The church-towers are riddled with shot, and the destructive effects of shells still visible in the heaps of ruins which have been left untouched. Since my visit it has also felt the force of American ire, and withstood a fierce bombardment for several days, with what object it is impossible to divine, since a couple of thousand men might have at any time taken it by assault. The castle was not attacked, and was concluded in the capitulation without being asked for — *cosa de Mexico*.\* The town was attacked by the American troops under General Scott within ten months after my visit. It suffered a bombardment, as is well known, of

\* In the Mexican way. (*Ed.*)

several days, an unnecessary act of cruelty in my opinion, since, to my knowledge, there were no defences round the city which could not have been carried, including the city itself, by a couple of battalions of Missouri volunteers. I certainly left Vera Cruz under the impression that it was not a fortified place, with the exception of the paltry wall I have mentioned, which, if my memory serves me, was not even loopholed for musketry. However, temporary defences might have been thrown up in the interval between my visit and the American attack; still I cannot but think that the bombardment was cruel and unnecessary. The castle could have been carried by a frigate's boarders, having but seven hundred naked Indians to defend it.\*

At the moment of my arrival there was no little excitement in Vera Cruz. The *siempre heroica* — always heroical city and castle — had pronounced for the immortal saviour of his country, as they

\* Three or four months after Ruxton's visit, and six or seven months before Scott's attack, the city, according to the Mexican minister of war, was garrisoned by a force of 3,360 men, with 144 pieces of artillery; and at San Juan de Ulloa there were 1,030 men and 135 mounted guns. Before the Americans arrived the city was surrounded by bastions terminating in two forts, and the garrison was reinforced. General Scott captured some 5,000 prisoners and 400 pieces of ordnance. (*Ed.*)



styled Santa Anna; forgetting, in their zeal, that twelve months before they had kicked out the same worthy, heaping every opprobrious epithet and abuse that Mexican *facultad de lengua* could devise. Moreover, the hero was hourly expected, and great preparations were on hand for his reception.

With this object the crack regiment of the Mexican army, *el once* — the 11th — which happened to be in garrison at the time cut most prodigious capers in the great plaza several times a-day, *disciplinando* — drilling for the occasion. Nothing can, by any possibility, be conceived more unlike a soldier than a Mexican *militar*. The regular army is composed entirely of Indians — miserable-looking pigmies, whose grenadiers are five feet high. Vera Cruz, being a show place, and jealous of its glory, generally contrives to put decent clothing, by subscription, on the regiment detailed to garrison the town; otherwise clothing is not considered indispensable to the Mexican soldier. The muskets of the infantry are (that is, if they have any) condemned Tower muskets, turned out of the British service years before. I have seen them carrying firelocks without locks, and others with locks without hammers, the lighted end of a cigar being used as a match to ignite the

powder in the pan. Discipline they have none. Courage a Mexican does not possess; but still they have that brutish indifference to death, which could be turned to account if they were well led, and officered by men of courage and spirit.

Before delivering my letters I went to a *fonda* or inn kept by a Frenchman, but in Mexico-Spanish style. Here I first made acquaintance with the frijole, a small black bean, which is the main food of the lower classes over the whole of Mexico, and is a standing dish on every table, both of the rich and poor. The cuisine, being Spanish, was the best in the world, the wine good, and abundance of ice from Orizaba. Amongst the company at the *fonda* was a party of Spanish padres, a capellan of a Mexican regiment, and a Capuchin friar. . . .


The next day I accompanied this clerical party to the castle of San Juan de Ulloa, which we were allowed to inspect in every part. I thought it showed very little caution, for I might have been an American for all they knew to the contrary. The fortress is constructed with considerable skill, but is in very bad repair. It is said to mount 350 pieces of artillery, many of heavy calibre, but is deficient in mortars. The garrison did not amount to more than 700 men, although they were in hourly expectation of an attack by the American squadron; and such a miserable set of naked ob-

jects as they were could scarcely be got together in any other part of the world.

Our party was ciceroned by an aide-de-camp of the governor, who took us into every hole and corner of the works. The soldiers' barracks were dens unfit for hogs, without air or ventilation, and crowded to suffocation.

In one of the batteries were some fine 98-pounders, all English manufacture, but badly mounted, and some beautiful Spanish brass guns. Not the slightest discipline was apparent in the garrison, and scarcely a sentinel was on the look-out, although the American squadron was in sight of the castle, and an attack was hourly threatened. On the side facing the island of Sacrificios the defences were very weak; indeed, I saw no obstruction of sufficient magnitude to prevent half a dozen boats' crews making a dash in the dark at the water-batteries, where at this time were neither guns nor men, nor one sentry whose post would command this exposed spot; thence to cross the ditch, which had but two or three feet of water in it, blow open the gate of the fortress with a bag of powder, and no organised resistance could be dreaded when once in the castle.

I pointed this out to one of the officers of the garrison. He answered, "*No hay cuidado, no hay cuidado! somos muy valientes*,— Never fear, never

fear! we are very brave here." "*Si quieren los Americanos, que vengan* — If the Americans like to try, let them come." 

As we returned at night to Vera Cruz, a dull yellowish haze hung over the town. I asked the "patron" of the boat what it was. Taking his cigar from his mouth, he answered quite seriously, "*Señor, es el vomito* — it's the fever."

There is a very good market at Vera Cruz: the fish department is well worth a visit. At sunrise the Indian fishermen bring in their basket-loads, which they pile on the ground; and the beautiful and varied tints of the fish, which exhibit all the colors of the rainbow, as well as the fish themselves, of all shapes and sizes, form a very pleasing sight. Two hours after sunrise the fish are all sold or removed: indeed, if not immediately cooked they will putrify in a few hours.

The vegetable-market is well supplied, and exhibits a great variety of tropical fruits. The Indians of the *tierra caliente* \* are neither picturesque in dress nor comely in appearance. They are short in stature, with thick clumsy limbs, broad faces without any expression, and a lazy sullen look of *insouciance*. They are, however, a harmless, inoffensive people, and possess many good traits of character and disposition. In the mar-

\* Hot coast lands. (*Ed.*)

ket devoted to flesh and fowl, parrots form a staple commodity. They are brought in in great numbers by the Indians, who lay great store on a talking-bird, "*un papagaya que habla.*" Pecaries, deer, and huge snakes I also saw exposed for sale.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PATRIOTIC TINMAN

ON the 16th of August the castle, with a salvo of artillery, announced the approach of the steamer having on board the illustrious ex-President — General Santa Anna. At 9 P. M. *el Onze* marched down to the wharf with colors flying and band playing. Here they marched and countermarched for two hours before a position was satisfactorily taken up. An officer of rank, followed by a most seedy aide-de-camp, both mounted on wretched animals, and dressed in scarlet uniforms of extraordinary cut, caracolled with becoming gravity before the *aduana* or customhouse. A most discordant band screamed national airs, and a crowd of boys squibbed and crackered on the wharf, supplied with fireworks at the expense of the heroic city. By dint of cuffing, *el Onze* was formed in two lines facing inwards, extending from the wharf to the *palacio*, where apartments had been provided for the General. Santa Anna landed under a salute from the castle, and walked, notwithstanding his

game leg, preceded by his little wife, who leaned on the arm of an officer, through the lane of troops, who saluted individually and when they pleased, some squibbing off their firelocks, and others, not knowing what to do, did nothing.

Don Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna is a hale-looking man between fifty and sixty, with an Old Bailey countenance and a very well built wooden leg. The Señora, a pretty girl of seventeen, pouted at the cool reception, for not one *viva* was heard; and her mother, a fat, vulgar old dame, was rather unceremoniously congéed from the procession, which she took in high dudgeon. The General was dressed in full uniform, and looked anything but pleased at the absence of everything like applause, which he doubtless expected would have greeted them. His countenance completely betrays his character: indeed, I never saw a physiognomy in which the evil passions, which he notoriously possesses, were more strongly marked. Oily duplicity, treachery, avarice, and sensuality are depicted in every feature, and his well-known character bears out the truth of the impress his vices have stamped upon his face. In person he is portly, and not devoid of a certain well-bred bearing which wins for him golden opinions from the surface-seeing fair sex, to whom he ever pays the most courtly attention.

If half the anecdotes are true which I have heard narrated by his most intimate friends, any office or appointment in his gift can always be obtained on application of a female interceder; and on such an occasion he first saw his present wife, then a girl of fifteen, whom her mother brought to the amorous President, to win the bestowal upon her of a pension for former services, and Santa Anna became so enamoured of the artless beauty, that he soon after signified his gracious intention of honoring her with his august hand. . . .

*Aug. 17.*— We had an *émeute* amongst the Veracruzanos. As I was passing through the great plaza, a large crowd was assembled before the Casa de Ayuntamiento, or town-hall. Accosting a negro, who, leaning against a pillar, was calmly smoking his paper cigar, a quiet spectator of the affair, I inquired the cause of the riotous proceeding. "*No es mucho, caballero; un pronunciamiento, no mas,*" he answered—"nothing, sir, nothing, only a revolution." On further inquiry, however, I learned that the cause of the mob assembling before the *ayuntamiento* was, that the people of Vera Cruz willed that one of that body should, as their representative, proceed to the palace to lay before Santa Anna a statement of certain grievances which they required should be removed. Not one relished the idea of bearding



the lion in his den, although supposed at this moment to be on his good behavior; but one Sousa, a native of Vera Cruz, and by trade a tinman, stepped forth from the crowd and declared himself ready to speak on the part of the people.

They had previously clamored for Santa Anna to show himself in the balcony of the palace, but he had excused himself on the plea of being unable to stand on account of his bad leg, and said he was ready at any time to receive and confer with one of their body. Sousa, the volunteer, at once proceeded to the palace, and without ceremony entered the General's room, where Santa Anna was sitting surrounded by a large staff of general officers, priests, &c. Advancing boldly to his chair, he exclaimed, "*Mi General*, for more than twenty years you have endeavored to ruin our country. Twice have you been exiled for your misdeeds: beware that this time you think of us, and not of yourself only!"

At this bold language Santa Anna's friends expressed their displeasure by hissing and stamping on the floor; but Sousa, turning to them with a look of contempt, continued: "These, General, are your enemies and ours; *y mas, son traidores* — and more than this, they are traitors. They seek alone to attain their ends, and care not whether they sacrifice you and their country. They will

be the first to turn against you. *Para nosotros, Vera-Cruzanos qui somos* — for us, who are of Vera Cruz — what we require is this: remove the soldiers; we do not want to be ruled by armed savages. Give us arms, and we will defend our town and our houses, but we want no soldiers.”

Santa Anna, taken aback, remained silent.

“Answer me, General,” cried out the sturdy tinman: “I represent the people of Vera Cruz, who brought you back, and will be answered.”

“To-morrow,” meekly replied the dreaded tyrant, “I will give orders that the troops be removed, and you shall be supplied with one thousand stand of arms.” “*Está bueno, mi General* — it is well, General” — answered Sousa, and returned to the mob, who, on learning of the result of the conference, filled the air with *vivas*.

“*Valgame en Dios!*” exclaimed my friend the negro; “*que hombre tan osado es este!* — what pluck this man must have to open his lips to the Presidente!”

The next morning Santa Anna left Vera Cruz for his hacienda — Manga del Clavo — first causing a *manifiesto* to be published, declaring his views and opinions with regard to the present critical state of affairs. This paper was very ably written by Rincon, and exhibited no little cleverness of composition, inasmuch as great tact was re-

quired, owing to the numerous tergiversations of Santa Anna, to steer clear of such subjects as would compromise his present declaration in favor of federalism, to which he has hitherto been strenuously opposed. In it he declares his determination to prosecute to the last the war with the United States, and his willingness to sacrifice his life and fortune in defence of his country; deprecates the notion of foreign intervention, and scouts at the idea of the "monarchical question" being introduced into any political discussion. In conclusion, he earnestly besought his countrymen to arm against the common foe.

Two or three days after my arrival in Vera Cruz, suspicious rumors of *vomito* reached my ears, and caused me to pack up my traps; and having determined to ride to Jalapa, instead of travelling by the lumbering diligencia [stage coach], my hospitable entertainers, on learning my intention, immediately made arrangements for a supply of cavalry, and placed me under the charge of a confidential servant of the house, who was to pilot me to Jalapa.

About 4 P.M. on the 19th of August, Castillo made his appearance, with a couple of horses equipped in Mexican style, himself attired in a correct road costume—black glazed sombrero with large brim and steeple crown, ornamented

with a band of silver cord and silver knob on the side; blue jacket with rows of silver buttons, and fancifully braided; *calzoneras* or pantaloons of velveteen, very loose, and open from the hip-bone to the bottom of the leg, the outside ornamented with filagree buttons; under these overalls, the *calzoncillas* or loose drawers of white linen; boots of untanned leather, with enormous spurs, buckled over the instep by a wide embroidered strap, and with rowels three inches and a half in diameter; a crimson silk sash round his waist, small open waistcoat exhibiting a snow-white shirt, a *puro* in his mouth, and a *quarta* or whip hanging by a thong from his wrist. Such was Castillo, not forgetting, however, that in person he was comely to look upon, and, living in an English house, was no libel upon his excellent cuisine, carrying a most satisfactory corporation and a fat good-humored face.

A common way of traveling in the *tierra caliente* is by *littera*, a litter carried between two mules, in which the traveller luxuriously reclines at full length, sheltered from the rain and sun by curtains which enclose the body, and smokes or reads at his pleasure. In one of these, about to return empty to Jalapa, I despatched my baggage, consigning a change of linen to Castillo's *alforjas* or saddle-bags. At 4 P.M. we trotted out of Vera Cruz,

and, crossing the sandy plain outside the town, pulled up at an Indian hut where Castillo informed me it was necessary to imbibe a stirrup-cup, which was accordingly presented by an Indian Hebe, who gave us a "*buen viage*" in exchange for the clacos \* we paid for the mezcal. The road here left the sandy shore, and turned inland, through a country rank with tropical vegetation, with here and there an Indian hut — a roof of palm-leaves supported on bamboo poles, and open to the wind — peeping out of the dense foliage.

We presently came to a part of the road cut up and flooded by the heavy rains which towards sunset poured mercilessly upon us, but not before Castillo had thrust his head through the slit in his sarape, and, with shoulders protected by his broad-brimmed sombrero, defied the descending waters. Not so my unlucky self, who, green as yet in the mysteries of Mexican travelling, had not provided against aqueous casualties, and in a few seconds my unfortunate Panama was flapping miserably about my ears, and my clothes as drenched as water could make them. However, there was no remedy, and on we floundered, through pools of mud and water full of ducks and snipe and white herons; the road becoming worse and worse, and the rain coming down with undeniable vigor. Just

\* Pieces of one-eighth of a dollar. (Ed.)

## CHAPTER V

### GENTLEMEN OF THE ROAD

**T**HE weather clearing, we resumed our journey, and halted to breakfast at Puente Nacional, once del Rey.

The bridge, built of stone, spans a picturesque torrent, now swollen and muddy with the rains. The village is small and dirty, with a tolerable inn, where the diligencia stops. Here we were regaled with frijoles [corn pancakes] and chile colorado [a dish highly seasoned with red pepper], and waited upon by a very pretty Indian girl.

The scenery is wild and desolate; the vegetation, although most luxuriant, looks rank and poisonous, and the vapors, which rise from the reeking undergrowth, bear all kinds of malaria over the country. Few villages are met with, and these consist of wretched hovels of unburnt brick (adobe), or huts of bamboo and palm-leaf. Each has its little patch of garden, where the plantain, maize, and chile are grown. Strings of the latter invariably hang on every house, and with it, fresh or dried, the people season every dish. The land appears good,

but, where everything grows spontaneously, the lazy Indian only cares to cultivate sufficient for the subsistence of his family. The soil is well adapted for the growth of cotton, sugar, and tobacco. I asked a farmer why he did not pay more attention to the cultivation of his land. "*Quien sabe*," was his answer; "*con maiz y chile, no falta nada* — who wants more than corn and chile, *vaya?* "

"These men are brutes," put in Castillo; "*ni vida saben* — they don't know even what it is to live;" just then a *biftek à la Ynglesa* in the kitchen of *la casa* in Vera Cruz occurring to his mind's eye.

When we turned out after breakfast we found the heavy rolling clouds clearing off, and the sun shining brightly from a patch of deep blue.

"*Ya viene buen tiempo* [we shall have good weather]," prophesied our host, as he held my stirrup; and for once he was a true prophet, for we had six or eight hours' magnificent weather, during which the sun dried our clothes, and baked the mud upon them, and we were enabled to keep our cigars alight, which, in the morning was an impossibility. The road was wretched, although it has been called by an ingenious traveller "a monument of human industry;" a monument of human ignorance and idleness would be the better term.

On each side the scenery was the same — a sea of burning green. Now, however, the woods were alive with birds of gaudy plumage: cardinals, and catbirds, and parrots, with noisy chatter, hopped from tree to tree; every now and then, the Mexican pheasant — *chachalaca* — a large noble bird, flew across the road; and *chupamirtos* (humming-birds) darted to and fro. The pools were black with ducks, cranes, and bitterns; the air alive with bugs and beetles; and in the evening *cocuyos* (fire-bugs) illuminated the scene. Mosquitos were everywhere, and probed with poisonous proboscis every inch of unprotected skin.

At sunset we reached El Plan del Rio, a miserable *venta* [hostelry], which we found crowded with cavalry soldiers and their horses, so that we had great trouble in finding room for our own animals. This hostelry belonged to the genus *meson*, a variety of the inn species to be found only in Mexico. It was, however, a paradise compared to the *mesones* north of the city of Mexico; and I remember that I often looked back upon this one, which Castillo and I voted the most absolutely miserable of inns, as a sort of Clarendon or Mivart's. Round the corral, or yard, where were mangers for horses and mules, were several filthily dirty rooms, without windows or furniture. These were the guests' chambers. Mine host and his family



had separate accommodations for themselves of course; and into this part of the mansion Castillo managed to introduce himself and me, and to procure some supper.

The *chambermaid* — who, unlocking the door of the room apportioned to us, told us to beware of the *mala gente* (the bad people) who were about — was a dried-up old man, with a long grizzled beard and matted hair, which fell, guiltless of comb or brush, on his shoulders. He was perfectly horrified at our uncomplimentary remarks concerning the cleanliness of the apartment, about the floor of which troops of fleas were caracolling, while flat odoriferous bugs were sticking in patches to the walls. My request for some water for the purpose of washing almost knocked him down with the heinousness of the demand; but when he had brought a little earthenware saucer, holding about a tablespoonful, and I asked for a towel, he stared at me open-mouthed without answering, and then burst out into an immoderate fit of laughter. “*Ay que hombre, Ave Maria Purissima, que loco es este!* — Oh, what a man, what a madman is this! *Servilleta, pañuela, toalla, que demonio quiere?* — towel, napkin, handkerchief — what the devil does he want?” — repeating the different terms I used to explain that I wanted a towel.

“*Ha, ha, ha! es medio-tonto, es medio-tonto —*

a half-witted fellow, I see. *Que demonio! quiere agua, quiere toalla!* — what the d—l! he wants water, towels, everything. *Adios!* ”

El Plan del Rio is situated in a circular valley or basin, surrounded by lofty hills, which are covered with trees. An old fort crowns the summit of a ridge on the left of the road, whence a beautiful view is had of the valley, which is the exact figure of a cup. We were now constantly ascending, and, leaving behind us the *tierra caliente* [hot zone], were approaching the more grateful climate of the *tierra templada*, or temperate region. At Los Dos Rios we had a good view of the Peak of Orizaba, with its cap of perpetual snow; and, still ascending, the scenery became more varied, the air cooler, and the country better cultivated; oaks began to show themselves, and the vegetation became less rank and more beautiful. Presently, cresting a hill, before us lay beautiful Jalapa, embosomed in mountains and veiled by cloud and mist.

Jalapa, the population of which is nearly 17,000, is situated at the foot of Macultepec, at an elevation of 4335 feet above the level of the sea. Unfortunately this elevation is about that which the strata of clouds reach, when, suspended over the ocean, they come in contact with the ridge of the Cordillera, and this renders the atmosphere exceedingly humid and disagreeable, particularly in

north-easterly winds. In summer, however, the mists disappear, the sun shines brightly, and the sky is clear and serene. At this time the climate is perfectly heavenly; the extremes of heat and cold are never experienced, and an even genial temperature prevails, highly conducive to health and comfort. Fever is here unknown; the dreaded *vomito* never makes its appearance on the table-land; and, in spite of the humid climate, sickness is comparatively rare and seldom fatal. The average temperature is 60° to 65° in summer.

There are seasons, however, when Jalapa presents a direct contrast to such a picture. Heavy dense clouds envelop, as in a shroud, the entire landscape; a floating mist hangs over the town; and the rolling vapors, which pour through the valley, cause a perpetual *chipi-chipi*, as this drizzling rain is termed. The sun is then for days obscured, and the Jalapeno, muffled in his sarape, smokes his cigarro, and mutters, "*Ave Maria Purissima, que venga el sol!* — O for a peep at the sun, Holy Virgin!"

On a bright sunny day the scenery round Jalapa is not to be surpassed: mountains bound the horizon, except on one side, where a distant view of the sea adds to the beauty of the scene. Orizaba, with its snow-capped peak, appears so close that one imagines it is within reach; and rich and evergreen

forests clothe the surrounding hills. In the foreground are beautiful gardens, with fruits of every clime — the banana and fig, the orange, cherry, and apple. The town is irregularly built, but picturesque; the houses are in the style of Old Spain, with windows to the ground, and barred, in which sit the Jalapeñas, with their beautifully fair complexions and eyes of fire.

“*Las Jalapeñas son muy halagueñas*” is a saying common in Mexico; and bewitching they are, even with their cigaritos, which make a good foil to a pretty mouth. Here is still preserved some of the *sangre azul*, the blue blood of Old Castile. Many of the Jalapa women are dazzlingly fair, whilst others are dark as a Malagueña. In the *fonda* [hotel] Vera Cruzana, where I put up, and advise all travellers to do the same, were two daughters of mine host — one as fair as Jenny Lind, the other dark as Jephtha’s daughter, and both very pretty. Although the proverb says “*Ventera hermosa, mal para la bolsa* — a pretty hostess gives no change” — here it is an exception; and my friend Don Juan will take good care of man and beast, and charge reasonably.

Near Jalapa are two or three cotton-factories, which I believe pay well. They are under the management of English and Americans. The girls employed in the works are all Indians or Mestizas,

healthy and good-looking. They are very apt in learning their work, and soon comprehend the various uses of the machinery. In the town there is but little to see. The church is said to have been founded by Cortez, and there is also a Franciscan convent. However, a stranger is amply interested in walking about the streets and market, where he will see much that is strange and new. The vicinity of Jalapa, although poorly cultivated, produces maize, wheat, grapes, jalap (from which plant it takes its name); and a little lower down the cordillera grow the vanilla, the bean which is so highly esteemed for its aromatic flavor, and fruits of the temperate and torrid zones.

On inquiry as to the modes of travelling from Jalapa to the city of Mexico, I found that the journey in the diligencia to the capital was to be preferred to any other at this season, on account of the rains; although by the former there was almost a certainty of being robbed or attacked. So much a matter of course is this disagreeable proceeding, that the Mexicans invariably calculate a certain sum for the expenses of the road, including the usual fee for *los caballeros del camino* [knights of the road]. All baggage is sent by the *arrieros* or muleteers, by which means it is ensured from all danger, although a long time on the road. The usual charge is twelve dollars a *carga*, or

mule-load of 200 lbs., from Vera Cruz to the capital, being from ten to twenty days on the road. The Mexicans never dream of resisting the robbers, and a coach-load of nine is often stopped and plundered by one man. The ladrones [thieves], however, often catch a Tartar if a party of foreigners should happen to be in the coach; and but the other day, two Englishmen, one an officer of the Guards, the other a resident in Zacatecas, being in a coach which was stopped by nine robbers near Puebla, on being ordered to alight and *bocabaxo* — throw themselves on their noses — replied to the request by shooting a couple of them, and, quietly resuming their seats, proceeded on their journey.

During my stay two English naval officers arrived in the diligencia from Mexico. As they stepped out, bristling with arms, the Mexican bystanders ejaculated, "*Valgame Dios!* What men these English are! *Esos son hombres!* — These *are* men!" The last week the coach was robbed three times, and a poor Gachupin, mistaken for an Englishman, was nearly killed, the robbers having vowed vengeance against the palefaces for the slaughter of their two comrades at Puebla; and a few months before, two robbers crawled upon the coach during the night, and, putting a pistol through the leathern panels, shot an unfortunate

passenger in the head, who, they had been informed, carried arms, and was determined to resist. There is not a travelling Mexican who cannot narrate to you his experiences on "the road;" and scarcely a foreigner in the country, more particularly English and Americans, who has not come to blows with the ladrones at some period or other of his life.

Such being the satisfactory state of affairs, before starting on this dangerous expedition, and particularly as I carried all my baggage with me (being too old a soldier ever to part with that), assisted by mine host Don Juan, I had a minute inspection of arms and ammunition, all of which were put in perfect order. One fine morning, therefore, I took my seat in the diligencia, with a formidable battery of a double-barrel rifle, a ditto carbine, two brace of pistols, and a blunderbuss. Blank were the faces of my four fellow-passengers when I entered thus equipped. They protested, they besought — every one's life would be sacrificed were one of the party to resist. "*Señores*," I said, "here are arms for you all: better for you to fight than be killed like rats." No, they washed their hands of it — would have nothing to do with gun or pistol. "*Vaya: no es el costumbre* — it is not the custom," they said.

From Jalapa the road constantly ascends, and

we are now leaving the *tierra templada*, the region of oaks and liquid amber, for the still more elevated regions of the *tierra fria* — called *cold*, however, merely by comparison, for the temperature is equal to that of Italy, and the lowest range of the thermometer is  $62^{\circ}$ . The whole table-land of Mexico belongs to this division. The scenery here becomes mountainous and grand; and on the right of the road is a magnificent cascade, which tumbles from the side of a mountain to the depth of several hundred feet. The villages are few, and fifteen or twenty miles apart, and the population scanty and miserable. No signs of cultivation appear, but little patches of maize and chile, in the midst of which is an Indian hut of reeds and flags.

In the evening we passed through a fine plain in which stands the town and castle of Perote, and near which is the celebrated mountain of basaltic porphyry, which, from the singular figure of a rock on its summit, is called "El Coffre," the chest. The castle of Perote is the "Tower" of Mexico. In it are confined the unlucky chiefs whom revolutions and counter-revolutions have turned upon their backs. The late President Paredes was at this time confined within its walls; and would have, in a day or two, the pleasure of seeing Santa Anna (who himself has been a resident here) pass in state to resume the reins of



government. However, in this country, over-turned presidents, *et hoc genus omne*, are always well treated, since it is the common fate of them all to be set up and knocked down like ten-pins, and therefore they have a fellow-feeling for each other in their adversity.

In Perote the houses present to the street a blank wall of stone without windows, and one large portal, which leads to the *patio-corrал*, or yard, round which are the rooms. This shows the want of security, where every man's house is indeed his castle. From Perote the dangerous road commences, and it is necessary, as the conductor informed me, *tener mucho cuidado* — to keep a sharp look-out.

We left Perote at four in the morning; consequently it was quite dark; and, as morning dawned, the first objects that met our view were the numerous little crosses on the roadside, many of them making the places where unfortunate travellers had been murdered. These crosses, however, have not always so bloody a signification, being placed in the road oftentimes to mark the spot where a coffin has been set down on its way to the burial-ground, in order that the bearers may rest themselves, or be changed for others. Every now and then our driver looked into the window to give notice that we were drawing near a dangerous spot,

saying, "*Ahora mal punto, muy mal punto* — now we are in a very bad place; look to your arms."

The country appeared rich and fertile, but, as usual, was wretchedly cultivated; and the same miserable population of Indians everywhere. Now and then a Mexican proper would gallop past, armed to the teeth, when our conductor invariably demanded, "*Que novedad hay?* — is there anything new?" — always having reference to the doings of the *ladrones*. "*No hay nada* — there is nothing stirring" — was generally the answer; which could seldom be relied on, as there is hardly a *ranchero* who is not in league with the robbers, and our informant was most likely one of them on the look-out.

At eleven we stopped to breakfast, and were joined by a stout wench of La Puebla, with a nut-brown face and teeth as white as snow. She informed us that there were *muy mala gente* on the road — very bad people — who had robbed the party with which she was travelling but the day before; and, being *muy sin vergüenza* — shameless rascals — had behaved very rudely to the ladies of the party. Our buxom companion was dressed in true Poblana style. Her long black hair was combed over her ears, from which descended huge silver earrings; the red *enagua*, or short petticoat, fringed with yellow, and fastened round her waist

with a silk band; from her shoulders to the waist a chemisette was her only covering, if we except the gray reboso drawn over her head and neck; and on her small naked foot was a tiny shoe with silver buckle.

However, we reached Puebla safe and sound, and drove into the yard of the Fonda de las Diligencias, where the coach and its contents were minutely inspected by a robber-spy, who, after he had counted the passengers and their arms, immediately mounted his horse and galloped away. This is done every day, and in the teeth of the authorities, who wink at the cool proceeding.

In a country where justice is not to be had — where injustice is to be bought — where the law exists but in name, and is despicable and powerless, it is not to be wondered at that such outrages are quietly submitted to by a demoralized people, who prefer any other means of procuring a living than by honest work; and who are ready to resort to the most violent means to gratify their insatiable passion for gambling, which is at the bottom of this national evil. It is a positive fact that men of all ranks and stations scruple not to resort to the road to relieve their temporary embarrassments, the result of gambling; and numerous instances might be brought forward where such parties have been detected, and in some cases executed for thus

offending against the laws. One I may mention — that of Colonel Yanes, aide-de-camp to Santa Anna, who was garrotted for the robbery and murder of the Swiss consul in Mexico a few years since.

## CHAPTER VI

### AS CORTEZ SAW IT

**P**UEBLA, the capital of the intendency of that name, is one of the finest cities in Mexico. Its streets are wide and regular, and the houses and public buildings are substantially built and in good taste. The population, which is estimated at between 80,000 and 100,000, is the most vicious and demoralized in the republic. It was founded by the Spaniards in 1531 on the site of a small village of Cholula Indians, and, from its position and the fertility of the surrounding country, was unsurpassed by any other city in the Spanish Mexican dominions. The province is rich in the remains of Mexican antiquities. The fortifications of Tlaxcallan and the pyramids of Cholula are worthy of a visit, and the noble cypress of Atlixo (the ahahuete, *cupressus disticha*, Lin.) is 76 feet in circumference, and, according to Humboldt, the "oldest vegetable monument" in the world.

At the *posada* at Puebla I was introduced to the most enormous woman I have ever seen, but unit-

ing with this awful magnitude the most perfect symmetry of form and feature. Her manners were perfectly lady-like, and she seemed in no degree disconcerted by her unusual size. I sat next her at supper, and in conversation she very abruptly alluded to her appearance, but with the most perfect good humor. "Would you believe, caballero," she said to me, "that there is in this very Puebla a girl actually fatter than I am?" "Many as fat, señorita," I answered, "but" (perpetrating a preposterously far-fetched compliment) "few so fair." "Ah, señor, you are laughing at me," she said: "*ya lo se bien que soy vaca, pero hay otra mas gorda que yo* — I know well that I am a cow, but, thank God, there is one other in the world fatter than I am."

I shuddered to see her shovelling huge masses of meat into her really pretty mouth, and thought of what the consequences would be in a few years' time, when her fine figure would subside into a mountain of flesh.

We left Puebla early in the morning, and, as day broke, a scene of surpassing beauty burst upon us. The sun rising behind the mountains covered the sky with a cold silvery light, against which the peaks stood out in bold relief, whilst the bases were still veiled in gloom. The snow-clad peak of Orizaba, the lofty Popocatepetl (the hill that

smokes) and Iztaccihuatl (the white woman) lifted their heads now bright with the morning sun. The beautiful plain of Cuixtla, covered with golden corn and green waving maize, stretched away to the mountains which rise in a gradual undulating line, from which in the distance shot out isolated peaks and cones, all clear and well defined.

Passing through a beautiful country, we reached Rio-Frio, a small plain in the midst of the mountains, and *muy mal punto* for the robbers, as the road winds through a pine-forest, into which they can escape in case of repulse. The road is lined with crosses, which here are veritable monuments of murders perpetrated on travellers. Here too we took an escort, and, when we had passed the *piñol*, the corporal rode up to the windows, saying, "*Ya se retira la escolta*,— the escort is about to retire "; in other words, Please remember the guard. Each passenger presented him with the customary *dos reales* (two dollars), and the gallant escort rode off quite contented. Here too, all the worst *puntos* being passed, my companions drew long breaths; muttered "*Ave Maria Purissima — gracias à Dios ya no hay cuidado*;" and lit their cigars. We soon after crested the ridge of the mountain, and, descending a winding road, turned an abrupt hill, and, just as I was settling

myself in the corner for a good sleep, my arm was seized convulsively by my opposite neighbor, who, with half his body out of the window, vociferated: "*Hi esta, hi esta, mire, por Dios, mire!* — Look out, for God's sake! there it is." Thinking a ladrone was in sight, I seized my gun, but my friend, seeing my mistake, drew in his head, saying, "*No, no, Mejico, Mejico, la cuidad!* (No, no, the city of Mexico!)."

To stop the coach and jump on the box was the work of a moment; and, looking down from the same spot where probably Cortez stood 300 years ago, before me lay the city and valley of Mexico, bathed by the soft flooding light of the setting sun.

He must be insensible indeed, a clod of clay, who does not feel the blood thrill in his veins at the first sight of this beautiful scene. What must have been the feelings of Cortez, when with his handful of followers he looked down upon the smiling prospect at his feet, the land of promise which was to repay them for all the toil and dangers they had encountered!

The first impression which struck me on seeing the valley of Mexico was the perfect, almost unnatural, tranquillity of the scene. The valley, which is about sixty miles long by forty in breadth,



is on all sides enclosed by mountains, the most elevated of which are on the southern side; in the distance are the volcanoes of Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, and numerous peaks of different elevation. The lakes of Tezcuco and Chalco glitter in the sun like burnished silver, or, shaded by the vapors which often rise from them, lie cold and tranquil on the plain. The distant view of the city, with its white buildings and numerous churches, its regular streets and shaded *paseos* [walks], greatly augments the beauty of the scene, over which floats a solemn, delightful tranquillity.

On entering the town, one is struck with the regularity of the streets, the chaste architecture of the buildings, the miserable appearance of the population, the downcast look of the men, the absence of ostentatious display of wealth, and the prevalence of filth which everywhere meet the eye. On every side the passenger is importuned for charity. Disgusting lepers whine for *clacos* [*tlacos*, pieces of one-eighth of a dollar]: maimed and mutilated wretches, mounted on the backs of porters, thrust out their distorted limbs and expose their sores, urging their human steeds to increase her pace as their victim increases his to avoid them. Rows of cripples are brought into the streets the first thing in the morning, and

deposited against a wall, whence their infernal whine is heard the livelong day. Cries such as these everywhere salute the ear:—

*“Jesus Maria Purissima; una corta caridad, caballero, en el nombre de la santissima madre de Dios: una corta caridad, y Dios lo pagara a usted*—In the name of Jesus the son of the most pure Mary, bestow a little charity, my lord; for the sake of the most holy mother of God, bestow a trifle, and God will repay you.”

Mexico is the head-quarters of dirt. The streets are dirty, the houses are dirty, the men are dirty and the women dirtier, and everything you eat and drink is dirty.

This love of dirt only refers to the Mexicans proper, since the Gachupines,\* and all foreigners in the city, and those Mexicans who have been abroad, keep themselves aloof and clean. The streets are filled with leperos [rag-tag and bob-tail] and officers in uniform (pleasing themselves as to the style), with priests, and fat and filthy Capuchinos friars and monks.

Observe every countenance; with hardly an exception a physiognomist will detect the expression

\* The Gachupin is the term of contempt which was bestowed upon the Spaniards in the War of Independence, and is now invariably used by the lower classes to distinguish a Spaniard from a Mexican.

of vice, and crime, and conscious guilt in each. No one looks you in the face, but all slouch past with downcast eyes and hang-dog look, intent upon thoughts that will not bear the light. The shops are poor and ill supplied, the markets filthy in the extreme. Let no one with fastidious stomach look into the *tortillerias*, the shops where pastry is made.

The stranger in Mexico is perpetually annoyed by the religious processions which perambulate the streets at all hours. A coach, with an eye painted on the panels, and drawn by six mules, conveys the host to the houses of dying Catholics who are rich enough to pay for the privilege: before this equipage a bell tinkles, which warns the orthodox to fall on their knees; and woe to the unfortunate who neglects this ceremony, either from ignorance or design. On one occasion, being suddenly surprised by the approach of one of these processions, I had but just time to doff my hat and run behind a corner of a building, when I was spied by a fat priest, who, shouldering an image, brought up the rear of the procession. As he was at the head of a vast crowd who were just rising from their knees, he thought it a good opportunity of venting an anathema against a vile *heretico*. Turning first to the crowd, as much as to say, "Just see what a dressing I am going to

give this fellow," he, with a most severe frown, addressed me: —

"Man," said he, "do you refuse to kneel to your God?" "No, *mi padre*," I answered, "*pero ál imagen de madera*"—but to an image of wood.

"*Vaya*," muttered the padre; "*lo te pagara el demonio*—the devil will pay thee"—and marched away.

The cathedral is a fine large building of incongruous architecture. The interior is rich in silver and gold candlesticks and ornaments of the precious metals. It is far inferior to the churches of Catholic Europe. I visited it during a grand *funcion*, when it was crammed with leperos and Indians, the odor from whose water-avoiding skins drove me quickly into the open air. I vainly searched for a Murillo, which is said to hang, unnoticed and unhonored, in some dark corner of the church. After a fruitless search of more than two hours, I gave it up, right glad to think that no production of that great master existed where it would not be appreciated. It is said the quantity of gold and silver plate and ornaments of precious stones possessed by this church are worth several millions sterling. They are, however, carefully hidden, lest they should excite the cupidity of some unscrupulous president; but the gold and silver, etc., actually displayed, would be well

worth the attention of a sacking party of American volunteers, should the city of the Aztecs be rash enough to stand an assault.

The interior is dark and gloomy, with the usual amount of tinsel and tawdry. The view, from the top, of the city and valley of Mexico, is very fine; although the old woman who keeps the key of the tower declares that the "*vista mas hermosa*—the most beautiful view"—is into the square, where nothing is to be seen but a stand of hack *corratelas*, and the scaffolding round Santa Anna's statue, which has just been dragged from its corner, and re-erected.

There is little or nothing in the shape of sight-seeing in Mexico. The national museum is worth a visit, as it contains a good collection of Mexican antiquities, of a light and trivial character, however. I have seen no Aztec remains which impressed me with the most distant idea that the ancient Mexicans possessed any of the arts of civilization, or were further advanced than many other nations of ingenious savages, who work in stones and feathers. In the working of stones they were certainly clever, and the wonder is, with the rude instruments they possessed, how they could fashion into any shape the brittle materials they made use of. Some masks of the human face, cut out of obsidian, are really well executed, as

are also several figures of beasts, insects, and reptiles, in amethyst, agate, porphyry, serpentine, etc. In the court-yard of the museum is a colossal equestrian statue of Charles the Fourth of Spain. This used to ornament the great square, where Humboldt assisted in its erection in 1808; but after the War of Independence, when kings went out of fashion in Mexico, it was removed to its present site. As a whole it is a work of merit, and the conception good; but possesses many glaring faults. The legs of the rider and hind quarters of the horse are out of all proportion; nevertheless the animal is a correct study of a Mexican horse. The drapery is good, and the attitude of the horse gives a good idea of a trotting charger.

One of the lions here is the collection of paintings by old (?) masters, belonging to the Conde de Cortina. They are now removed to the Count's *casa de campo*, or country seat, at Tacubaya, and enjoy the reputation of being the choicest gallery on the continent of America. Amongst them are two reputed Murillos, and some others attributed to the first masters.

I gladly availed myself of an opportunity to inspect the collection, which, I regret to say, greatly disappointed me. One of the paintings attributed to Murillo, although of considerable merit, does not possess one iota of the style pecul-

iar to that great master; the other is manifestly spurious. Of the remainder I need only say that they have been collected at great expense, but I fear with little judgment. The Conde de Cortina, the head of an old Spanish family, has expended large sums of money in making this collection, but it is to be regretted that the agents to whom he intrusted the purchase of paintings have, either through ignorance or imposition, squandered away such large sums as would, if judiciously spent, have been sufficient to have purchased many of the finest pictures in Europe.

Tacubaya is the Richmond of Mexico: villas and country residences abound, where the aristocracy resort during the hot months. The road passes the great aqueduct which supplies the city with water from a spring in Chapultepec. It is not strongly built, and the arches exhibit many cracks and fissures occasioned by the earthquakes. At this season the valley was partly inundated, and the road almost impassable to carriages.

By this road Cortez retreated from the city on the memorable "*noche triste*," the sorrowful night. The fatal causeway, the passage of which was so destructive to the Spaniards, was probably on nearly the same site as the present road, but the latter since that period has entirely changed its character. On returning from Tacubaya, I visited

the hill of Chapultepec, celebrated as being the site of Montezuma's palace, on which, towards the end of the seventeenth century, the viceroy Galvez erected a huge castle, the remains of which are now occupied by the military school.

Far more interesting than the apocryphal tradition of the Indians' palace, the viceroy's castle, or the existing eyesore, is the magnificent grove of cypress, which outlives all the puny structures of man, and, still in the prime of strength and beauty, looks with contempt on the ruined structures of generation after generation which have passed away.

One of these noble trees is upwards of seventeen yards in girth, and the most picturesque, and at the same time most nobly proportioned tree, it is possible to conceive. It rises into the sky a perfect pyramid of foliage, and from its sweeping branches hang pendulous, graceful festoons of a mossy parasite. There are many others of equal height and beauty, but this one, which I believe is called Montezuma's cypress, stands more isolated, and is therefore conspicuously grand. From the summit of the hill, to which a path winds through a labyrinth of shrubs, a fine view of the valley and city of Mexico is obtained, and of the surrounding mountains and volcanic peaks.



## CHAPTER VII

### HIGH LIFE AND LOW

**T**HE "Paseo" is the Hyde Park of Mexico. Here resort, about four in the afternoon, all the gay and fashionable of the city. Coaches, built in the days of our great-grandfathers, rumble along on their ponderous leathern springs, drawn by teams of sleek and handsome mules. Out of the quaint windows peep the lustrous eyes of the señoritas, dressed in simple white. The modern European carriages of the foreign ministers dash past; amongst them, conspicuous for correctness of turn-out, the "Clarence" of her Britannic Majesty's representative, with his lady dressed *à la Mexicana*, and drawn by a pair of superb mules. Caballeros curvet on their *caballas de paseo* — park hacks — with saddles and bridles worth a Jew's ransom, and all dressed *para la silla* — for the saddle — eschewing everything in the shape of "tail" to their coats; for on horseback the correct thing is the *chaqueta*, an embroidered jacket, alive with buttons and bullion. The *som-*

*brero Mexicano*, and pantaloons open from the knee and garnished with silver buttons, and silver spurs of enormous size and weight, complete their costume. The horse appointments are still more costly. The saddle, the pommel and cantle of which are of solid silver, is embossed with the same metal in every part; the stirrups, covered by a flap of ornamented leather, and the massive bit, are of silver, and frequently partly of gold; and the reins, and every other portion of the equipment, are in similar style. After a turn or two in the broad drive, the carriages range up side by side along the road, whence their fair inmates admire the passing dandies as they curvet past on their well-trained steeds. To the eye of an Englishman nothing is more ridiculous than a Mexican's seat on horseback: the form of the saddle compels him to sit bolt upright, or rather overhanging the pommel, whilst the stirrups, placed behind the girth, draw his legs far behind the centre of gravity, his toes just touching the ponderous stirrup. Every moment you expect him to fall with his nose between the horse's ears, but the high cantle and pommel hold him as in a vise, and render his being spilt anything but an easy matter.

The *Paseo* itself is a very poor affair, and made still more so by two ridiculous fountains, which

rival in meanness the equally absurd squirts in our Trafalgar Square.

The private houses in Mexico are well built and commodious. The exteriors of many are chastely and most beautifully decorated, and the rooms are lofty and well proportioned. The entrance is by a large gateway (sometimes double, the exterior one being of open iron-work) into the *patio* or courtyard, round which are the stables, coach-houses, and servants' offices. The visitor has frequently to thread his way through horses and mules, frisking under the hands of grooms, *mozos de caballo*. The dwelling-rooms are on the first and upper stories.

The hotels are few and wretchedly bad. The best is "La Gran Sociedad," under the same roof with the theatre "Nacional," now rechristened "of Santa Anna." This is the grand theatre, and is rather a good house, with a company of Spanish comedians. There is also a smaller one, devoted to light comedy and vaudeville. The performers are generally from the Havana, and occasionally a "star" arrives from Old Spain.

The streets of Mexico at night present a very animated appearance. In the leading thoroughfares the *tortilleras* display their tempting viands, illuminated by the blaze from a *brazero*, which serves to keep the tortillas and *chil  colorado* in a

proper state of heat. To these stalls resort the arrieros [muleteers] and loafers of every description, tempted by the shrill invitations of the presiding fair ones to taste their wares. Urchins, with blazing links, run before the lumbering coaches proceeding to the theatres. Cargadores — porters — stand at the corners of the flooded streets, to bear across the thin-booted passenger on their backs. The cries of the pordioseros, as the beggars are called from their constant use of "*por Dios*," redouble as the night advances. The mounted ones urge their two-legged steeds to cut off the crowd thronging towards the theatres, mingling their supplications for alms with oburgations on their lazy hacks.

"*Una limosnita, caballero, por* (to the cargador) *Malraya! piernas de piedra, anda — and-a-a* — a small trifle, my little lord, for the sake of — (aside to the unfortunate porter, in a stage whisper) Thunder and fury, thou stony-legged one! get on for the love of mercy: he is going to give me a claco. *Ar-hé — ar-r-hé.*"

Red-petticoated *poblanas*,\* reboso-wrapped, display their little feet and well-turned ankles as they cross the gutters; and, cigar in mouth, they wend their way to the fandangos of the Barrio de Santa Anna. From every pulque-shop is heard

\* The *poblana* is the *manola* of Mexico,

the twanging of guitars, and the quivering notes of the cantadores, who excite the guests to renewed potations by their songs in praise of the grateful liquor. The popular chorus of one of these is:—

*"Sabe que es pulque?  
Licor divino-o!  
Lo beben los angeles  
En el sereno-o."*

Know ye what pulque is?  
Liquor divine!  
Angels in heaven  
Prefer it to wine.

Those philosophical strangers who wish to see "life in Mexico" must be careful what they are about, and keep their eyes skinned, as they say in Missouri. Here there are no detective police from which to select a guide for the back slums—no Sergeant Shackel to initiate one into the mysteries of St. Giles's and the Seven Dials. One must depend upon his own nerve and bowie-knife, his presence of mind and Colt's revolver: but, armed even with all these precautions, it is a dangerous experiment, and much better to be left alone. Provided, however, that one speaks the language tolerably well, is judicious in the distribution of his dollars, and steers clear of committing any act of gallantry by which he may provoke the jealousy and

*cuchillo* [knife] of the susceptible *Mejicano*, the expedition may be undertaken without much danger, and a satisfactory moral drawn therefrom.

One night, equipped from head to foot "*al paisano*" (in the mode of the country), and accompanied by one José Maria Canales, a worthy rascal, who in every capacity, from a colonel of dragoons to a horse-boy, had perambulated the republic from Yucatan to the valley of Taos, and had inhabited apartments in the palace of the viceroys as well as in the Acordada, and nearly every intermediate grade of habitation, I sallied out for the very purpose of perpetrating such an expedition as I have attempted to dissuade others from undertaking.

Our first visit was to the classic neighborhood of the Acordada, a prison which contains as unique a collection of malefactors as the most civilized cities of Europe could produce. On the same principle as that professed by the philosopher, who, during a naval battle, put his head into a hole through which a cannon-shot had just passed, as the most secure place in the ship, so do the rogues and rascals, the pickpockets, murderers, burglars, highwaymen, coiners, *et hoc genus omne*, choose to reside under the very nose of the gallows.

My companion, who was perfectly at home in this locality, recommended that we should first visit

a celebrated *pulqueria*, where he would introduce me to a caballero — a gentleman — who knew everything that was going on, and would inform us what amusements were on foot on that particular night. Arrived at the pulque-shop, we found it a small filthy den, crowded with men and women of the lowest class, swilling the popular liquor, and talking unintelligible slang. My cicerone led me through the crowd, directly up to a man who, with his head through a species of sack without sleeves, and *sans chemise*, was serving out the pulque to his numerous customers. I was introduced as “*un forastero, un caballero Yngles* — a stranger — an English gentleman,” his particular friend. Mine host politely offered his hand, assured me that his house and all in it was mine from that hour, poured us out two large green tumblers of pulque, and requested us to be seated.

It was soon known that a foreigner was in the room. In spite of my dress and common sarape, I was soon singled out. Cries of “*Estrangero, Tejano, Yanqué, burro*,” saluted me; I was a Texan, a Yankee, and consequently burro — a jackass. The crowd surrounded me, women pushed through the throng, *à ver el burro* — to look at the jackass; and threats of summary chastisement and ejection were muttered. Seeing that affairs began to look cloudy, I rose, and, placing

my hand on my heart, assured the *caballeros y las señoritas* that they labored under a slight error: that, although my face was white, I was no Texan, neither was I Yankee or a jackass, but "*Yngles, muy amigo a la republica* — an Englishman, having the welfare of the republic much at heart"; and that my affection for them, and hatred of their enemies, was something too excessive to express: that to prove this, my only hope was that they would do me the kindness to discuss at their leisure half an arroba of pulque, which I begged then and there to pay for, and present to them in token of my sincere friendship.

The tables were instantly turned: I was saluted with cries of "*Viva el Yngles! Que meueren los Yanqués! Vivan nosotros y pulque!* — Hurrah for the Englishman! Death to the Yankees! Long live ourselves and pulque!" The dirty wretches thronged round to shake my hand, and semi-drunken *poblanas* lavished their embraces on "*el guëro.*" I must here explain that, in Mexico, people with fair hair and complexions are called *guëro, guëra*; and, from the caprice of human nature, the *guëro* is always a favorite of the fair sex: the same as, in our country, the olive-colored foreigners with black hair and beards are thought "such loves" by our fair countrywomen. The *guëro*, however, shares this favoritism with the



genuine unadulterated negro, who is also greatly admired by the *Mejicanas*.

After leaving the pulqueria, we visited, without suspicion, the dens where these people congregate for the night — filthy cellars, where men, women, and children were sleeping, rolled in sarapes, or in groups, playing at cards, furiously smoking, quarrelling, and fighting. In one we were attracted to the corner of a room, whence issued the low sobs of a woman, and, drawing near the spot as well as the almost total darkness would admit, I saw a man, pale and ghastly, stretched on a sarape, with the blood streaming from a wound in the right breast, which a half-naked woman was trying in vain to quench. He had just been stabbed by a lepero with whom he had been playing at cards and quarrelled, and who was coolly sitting within a yard of the wounded man, continuing his game with another, the knife lying before him covered with blood.

The wound was evidently mortal; but no one present paid the slightest attention to the dying man, excepting the woman, who, true to her nature, was endeavoring to relieve him.

After seeing everything horrible in this region of crime, we took an opposite direction, and, crossing the city, entered the suburb called the *Barrio de Santa Anna*.

This quarter is inhabited by a more respectable class of villains. The *ladrones à caballo* — knights of the road — make this their rendezvous, and bring here the mules and horses they have stolen. It is also much frequented by the *arrieros*, a class of men who may be trusted with untold gold in the way of trade, but who are, when not "*en atajo*" (employed), as unscrupulous as their neighbors. They are a merry set and the best of companions on the road; make a great deal of money, but, from their devotion to pulque and the fair sex, are always poor. "*Gastar dinero como arriero* — to spend money like an *arriero*" — is a common saying.

In a meson [inn] much frequented by these men we found a fandango of the first order in progress. An *atajo* having arrived from Durango, the *arrieros* belonging to it were celebrating their safe arrival by entertaining their friends with a *bayle*; and into this my friend, who was "one of them," introduced me as an *amigo particular* — a particular friend.

The entertainment was *al-fresco*, no room in the meson being large enough to hold the company; consequently the dancing took place in the corral, and under the *portales*, where sat the musicians, three guitars and a tambourine, and where also was good store of pulque and mezcal.

The women, in their dress and appearance, reminded me of the *manolas* of Madrid. Some wore very picturesque dresses, and all had massive ornaments in gold and silver. The majority, however, had on the usual *poblana enagua*, a red or yellow kind of petticoat, fringed or embroidered, over the simple chemisette, which, loose and unconfined, except at their waists, displayed most prodigally their charms. Stockings are never worn by this class, but they are invariably very particular in their *chaussure*, a well-fitting shoe, showing off their small well-formed feet and ankles.

The men were all dressed in elaborate Mexican finery, and in the costumes of the different provinces of which they were natives.

The dances resembled, in a slight degree, the *fandango* and *arabe* of Spain, but were more clumsy, and the pantomimic action less energetic and striking. Some of the dances were descriptive of the different trades and professions. *El Zapatero*, the shoe-maker; *el Sastroncito*, the little tailor; *el Espadero*, the swordsman, &c., were amongst those in the greatest demand; the guitar-players keeping time and accompanying themselves with their voices in descriptive songs.

The *fandango* had progressed very peacefully, and good humor had prevailed until the last hour, when, just as the dancers were winding up the

evening by renewed exertions in the concluding dance, the musicians, inspired by pulque, were twanging with vigor their relaxed catgut, and a general chorus was being roared out by the romping votaries of Terpsichore, above the din and clamor a piercing shriek was heard from a corner of the corral, where was congregated a knot of men and women, who chose to devote themselves to the rosy god for the remainder of the evening, rather than the exertions of the dance. The ball was abruptly brought to a conclusion, every one hastening to the quarter whence the shriek proceeded.

Two men with drawn knives in their hands were struggling in the arms of several women, who strove to prevent their encounter — one of the women having received an ugly wound in the attempt, which had caused the shriek of pain which had alarmed the dancers.

“*Que es eso?* — What is this?” — asked a tall powerful *Duranguenho*, elbowing his way through the crowd. “*Que quieren esos gallos?* — What do those gamecocks want? *¿A pelear?* — To fight, eh? *Vamos, a ver los toros!* — Come, let us see the fun!” — he shouted. In an instant a ring was formed; men and women standing at a respectable distance, out of reach of the knives. Two men held the combatants, who, with sarapes rolled

round their arms, passion darting out of their fiery eyes, looked like two bulldogs ready for the fray.

At a signal they were loosed at each other, and, with a shout, rushed on with uplifted knives. It was short work with them, for at the first blow the tendons of the right arm of one of them were severed, and his weapon fell to the ground; and as his antagonist was about to plunge his knife into the body of his disarmed foe, the bystanders rushed in and prevented it, at the same moment that the *patrulla* (the patrol) entered the corral with bayonets drawn, and *sauve-qui-peut* was the word; a visit to the Acordada being the certain penalty of being concerned in a brawl where knives have been used, if taken by the guard. For myself, with a couple of soldiers at my heels, I flew out of the gate, and never stopped until I found myself safe under the sheets, just as daybreak was tinging the top of the cathedral.

Society in Mexico, although good, is not much sought after by the foreign residents, who have that resource amongst themselves; neither do the Mexicans themselves care to mix with those out of their own circle. The Mexican ladies are totally uneducated, and in the presence of foreigners, conscious of their inferiority, are usually shy and reserved. This of course refers only to general

society. In their own houses, and amongst themselves, they are vivacious, unaffectedly pleasing in their manners and conversation; and in all classes is evinced a warmth of heart and sympathy which wins for the women of Mexico the respect and esteem of all strangers. As for their personal attractions, I will say, that, although not distinguished for beauty, I never once remember to have seen a really ugly woman. Their brilliant eyes make up for any deficiency of feature, and their figures, uninjured by frightful stays, are full and voluptuous. Now and then, moreover, one does meet with a perfectly beautiful creature; and when a Mexican woman does combine such perfection she is "some pumpkins," as the Missourians say when they wish to express something superlative in the female line.

For everything connected with the manners and mantua-making of Mexico, the reader is recommended to consult Madame Calderon de la Barca, who, making allowances for the *couleur de rose* with which she tints all her pictures, is a lively painter of men, manners, and millinery.

Great preparations were in progress for the proper reception of the great Santa Anna, who was daily expected to arrive in the city from the Encerro, his country-house, and where, under the pretence that his leg (a never-failing resource) was

in such a state of inflammation that he was unable to travel, he had been very wisely waiting the course of events, until such time as the popular feeling should manifest itself in his favor. His statue, which, on the occasion of his being kicked out of Mexico a year before, had been consigned to a corner, was now restored to light, and in course of erection in the plaza. Painters were busy at the corners of the streets printing his name and erasing the new one, which at his last exit had been substituted for the numerous Calles de Santa Anna.

The *Teatro Nacional* was once more the *Teatro de Santa Anna*. Triumphal arches were erected in every direction, with inscriptions laudatory of his achievements. One, erected on the spot where they, twelve months before, shut the gates on him, throwing his renowned leg after him, hailed him in enormous letters as "*El benemerito de su patria: el immortal salvador de la republica: el heroe de Tamaalipas* — the hero of Tamaalipas: the immortal saviour of the republic: the man who deserved well of his country: the hero of a hundred fights." At night a crowd — hired by the friends of Santa Anna — perambulated the streets carrying torches and long stalks of maize, crying, "*Viva Santa Anna y Mejico: meuren los estrangeros* — death to the foreigners," &c.

After I had been a few days in Mexico I made preparations for my journey to the north. In my search for horses and mules I paid a visit to the horse-dealing establishment of one Smith, a Yankee, and quite a character, who is making a fortune in the trade of horseflesh. His stables were filled with nags of all sorts and sizes, and amongst them were some of General Taylor's troop-horses, belonging to a detachment of dragoons which was captured by the Mexicans on the Rio Grande. Smith, who is a hearty John-Bull-looking man, has the reputation with the Mexicans of being *muuy picaro* — up to snuff — as what horse-jockey is not? but he has all the custom of the city, and is of course a great authority on all subjects connected with horseflesh. A deputation had just waited upon him to persuade him to officiate as Jehu to a carriage and four which was to be despatched some ten miles out of the city to bring in Santa Anna. Five hundred dollars was, I believe, the sum offered, which the independent Smith refused, as it was a *sine quâ non* that he should attire himself in a General's uniform, as he called it, but in plain terms, what was nothing more or less than a chasseur's livery.

I selected and purchased two horses from his stud, and better animals never felt a saddle: one I rode upwards of 3000 miles, and brought it to



the end of the journey without flinching; the other, a little blood-horse from the *tierra caliente*, with a coat as fine as silk, I was obliged to part with before entering the intemperate climate of New Mexico, where the cold would have quickly killed it. For mules I visited the Barrio de Santa Anna, the head-quarters of the arriero, where I soon provided myself with those useful animals.

The greatest difficulty was to procure servants, who were unwilling to undertake a journey of such a length, New Mexico being here quite a *terra incognita*, and associated with ideas of wild beasts and wilder Indians, and horrors of all sorts. I at length hired a mozo [servant] to proceed with me as far as Durango, 550 miles from Mexico, and considered the Ultima Thule of civilization. He was a tall shambling Mexican, from Puebla: his name, as usual, Jesus Maria. His certificate of character announced him to be "*muy hombre de bien* — very respectable, faithful, and a good road-servant." His wages were one dollar a-day and his food — "*un peso diario y la comida*" — or nearly 80*l.* a-year of sterling money.

I was so fortunate as to become acquainted with a young Spaniard who was about to start for the mines of Guadaloupe y Calvo; and as our road as far as Durango was the same, we agreed to travel in company, which was as agreeable on the score

of companionship, as it was advantageous in point of security against the attacks of robbers, who, in large bands, infest this road.

We had, however, anything but a pleasant prospect before us, as the rainy season was at its height; the valley of Mexico was inundated, and the roads almost impassable. In the city of Mexico an inundation was dreaded. The streets were many of them covered with water, and the black mud was oozing out from between the stones of the pavement in every direction, showing the boggy nature of the foundation on which the city is built.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HITTING THE TRAIL

ON the 14th of September, just as a salvo of artillery announced the entrance of Santa Anna into the city, our cavalcade, consisting of upwards of twenty horses and mules, packed and loose, sallied out of the north gate, and entered a large common outside the city; and then, once out of the streets, where they were easily managed, each loose horse and mule, throwing up its head with a grunt of pleasure at seeing the open country, betook itself to independent expeditions in search of grass. The mozos rushed frantically here and there to collect the scattered *atajo* [outfit]. The pack-mules threw up their hind legs and refused to listen to reason. A big beast of a mule, that was carrying my heaviest packs, lay down and rolled, disarranged the *aparejo* or pack-saddle, and off tumbled the baggage into the mud;—my rifle-case disappeared in a deep pool, into which my mozo dived head first to rescue it. By this time the other mules had most of them got rid of their packs and were

quietly grazing, but were at length caught and repacked, brought to some degree of order, and we resumed our journey — my mozo meeting with an accident which was near proving serious; on attempting to remount his horse it plunged and threw him upon his head, and for several minutes, stunned by the fall, he was perfectly insensible. The same horse played me the same trick some days after.

With mules, the first day's start is invariably a scene of the greatest confusion. The animals are wild, the pack-saddles have always something wanting, and the mozos half drunk and helpless. In a few days, however, everything is ship-shape; the mules become as docile as dogs, are packed well and quickly, and proceed along the road in regular order.

After proceeding a few miles we found the country entirely covered with water, and the road almost impassable. Six miles from the city we met some cars floating in the road, and the carriers were swimming the cargoes — cases of *cebo* (grease or lard) — to a dry spot. A little farther on a *carratela* [coach], full of ladies, was stuck hard and fast in the mud; the mules grazing on the road-side, and the men away seeking assistance. A troop of donkeys carrying charcoal to the city presented the most absurd spectacle. The

poor patient animals were literally buried in the mud to their very necks, and unable to move a limb. There they remained, the very picture of patience, whilst the arrieros removed their packs and laid them on the mud. Our animals, being strong and fresh, got safely through, after a hard struggle, and by dint of the most incessant vociferations on the part of our mozos, and with the assistance of a score of invoked saints.

About dusk we reached Guatitlan, a small town fifteen miles from Mexico, and put up in the meson, the corral of which was belly-deep in black mud, and round which were half a dozen rooms filthily dirty and destitute of furniture. We procured for supper a pipkin of rice-soup and tomatos and a dish of frijoles; after which, drenched to the skin and sleepy, I rolled myself in my wet sarape, and rushed into the arms, not of Somnus, but of hundreds of thousands of fleas and bugs and mosquitos, whose merciless attacks continued till two o'clock in the morning, when, swallowing a cup of chocolate, we were in our saddles and on our journey.

*Sept. 15th.*— To avoid the water-covered plains we took the mountain-road, passing through a tract of country covered with lava and scoria, with wild and picturesque scenery. At the little village of Tapage we halted to breakfast, for which

purpose, as there was no meson or public-house of any description, we took by storm a little mud-built house, where an old Indian woman was making tortillas at the door. Our mozos laid the village under contribution, and soon returned with a hatful of eggs, which our Indian hostess, with the aid of chile colorado and garlic, converted into a palatable dish.

On crossing the bridge over an arroyo [water-course] outside the village my attention was drawn to the figure of an Indian who was kneeling before a little cage built in the parapet of the bridge. Looking through the bars, I was surprised to see two exceedingly clever heads of Joseph and Mary in a framed painting. They were executed, the Indian informed me, by an artist who passed through Tapage a short time before.

The country here is very beautiful, but poorly cultivated, and the population squalid and miserable in the extreme. About noon we arrived at the hacienda [farmstead] of Canañas, in which is a meson of the usual description. I enjoyed a bath in the ice-cold waters of a fierce mountain-stream, which dashes through a wild dell clothed with beautiful shrubs. As I was lying on the ground enjoying a cigar after my bath, a number of Indians approached, and examined me with the

greatest curiosity. Many of them had never before seen a foreigner, and, as they stood staring round me, muttered, "*Valgame en Dios; Ave Maria Purissima! que güero, güero, y habla como nosotros!*" — How white, how white is this man, and yet speaks as we do!"

The day was beautiful; and as we had finished our day's journey of thirty-five miles by one o'clock, the afternoon was devoted to cleaning mules and horses and arranging aparejos. Our supper consisted of rice, chile, and frijoles, after which I rolled myself like a mummy in my sarape, and, spite of entomological attacks, was asleep in an instant, and stood the assaults of mosquito, bug, and flea, until the mesonero (inn-keeper) roused me at three o'clock with a cup of chocolate, which is the only obtainable breakfast in all the mesones on the road.

16th.—We picked our way up a mountain in the dark, through a perfect sea of rocks and stones, and on the summit came suddenly upon the bivouac of a large party of arrieros, who were lying snoring in their sarapes round a roaring fire, their mules grazing round them. I got off my horse to light a cigar at their fire, when one of them, starting up and seeing a stranger, shouted "*Ladrones!*" which quickly roused the rest, who seized their *escopetos* [muskets] and shouted

"Where, where?" Seeing their mistake, they rubbed their eyes, and asked the news — the *novedades* — which I found with them related to the state of the roads, and not revolutions, counter-revolutions, and the like, with which, true philosophers, they never trouble their heads. In the first part of this day's journey the country was mountainous, and covered with dwarf-oak and ilex. We then entered upon a tract of open undulating downs dotted with thickets, but with no signs of habitation. Every eight or ten miles we passed a miserable Indian village with its patch of maize, but the country is entirely uncultivated with this exception, and not a soul is met on the road. The downs here resemble the rolling prairie of the far West, are covered with excellent grass, and are capable of supporting immense herds of cattle. The plains are singularly destitute of trees, which the Mexicans say were destroyed by the Spanish conquerors, but with what object it is impossible to understand, for the want of fuel is a great drawback to the settlement of this portion of the country.

At 2 P. M. we arrived at the end of our day's journey, thirty-five miles, halting at the Hacienda del Rio Sarco — the farm of the muddy brook. We found here a detachment of cavalry on their way to the seat of war, and three staff-officers re-



requested permission to join our party the next day as a security against robbers. The meson was better than usual, being the stopping-place of the diligencia to Fresnillo; but of beds we had taken a long leave; at least I had — for my companion, more luxurious, carried a camp-bedstead, which was the load of two mules.

I do not think I have fully described a meson, which, as it is a characteristic discomfort of Mexican travelling, deserves a sketch.

The meson is everywhere the same in form; a large corral, or yard, entered by a huge gateway, is surrounded by some half-dozen square rooms without windows or furniture. In one corner is generally a stone platform raised about three feet from the floor of clay. This is the bed. A little deal table is sometimes furnished if demanded. In one corner of the corral is the *cocina*, the kitchen, so called — *lucus a non lucendo* — from the fact that nothing is cooked there; and in an outer yard is the *caballeriza*, the stable, with a well in the centre. The mules are unpacked and the baggage secured in one of the rooms destined for the masters, while the aparejos and saddles, &c., are placed in another occupied by the servants. On entering, the mozo shouts for the mesonero, the landlord, who makes his appearance, armed with the key of the granary, where corn and straw are kept. He

condescends to serve out the straw and barley, or maize, as the case may be, all of which is duly weighed. The mules and horses are consigned to the stable and fed, after which the *mozos* forage for themselves and masters. The following conversation then takes place with the landlord:—

*Mozo*.—" *Amigo, que hay a comer?* — What is there to eat? "

*Mesonero*.—" *Ah, señor, aquí no hay nada* — Ah, my lord, there is nothing here."

*Mozo*.—" *Valgame Dios, que país es este!* — Heaven defend me, what a country have we come to! "

*Mesonero*.—" *Si, señor, es muy pobre* — It's true, my lord, it's a very poor country."

*Mozo*.—" *Pero que vamos hacer? Estan muriendo de hambre los caballeros* — But what are we to do? The gentlemen are dying of hunger."

*Mesonero*.—" *Si, sus mercedes lo gustan, hay pollo, hay frijoles, hay chile colorado, hay tortillas* — Well, if their worships like it, they can have a fowl and frijoles, and red peppers and tortillas."

*Mozo*.—" *Esta bueno, amigo!* — Capital, my friend! and let there be enough for us too "; and then "*Quien sabe* " how much corn the horses eat! Eh, my friend (winking his eye): "*Vaya, que vengan* — Go to, let them be prepared."— Exit *Mesonero*.

In due course several pipkins make their appearance, containing the pollo, the frijoles, the chile colorado, and a pile of tortillas: knives, spoons, and forks are not known in a meson.

In the morning, before daylight, the mesonero makes his appearance with the little cups of coffee, and *biscochos* (a sweet cake), and presents the bill.

17th.—Leave Rio Sarco—the Mexican officers in company. These worthies amused us vastly by their accounts of what they were going to do. General Ampudia, they said, was merely waiting for the Americans to advance, when he intended to entrap them, leap upon and annihilate them at once; that hitherto he had had but raw troops, rancheros and the like, but, when the regular cavalry reach him, then, *a Dios!* he *would* act.\*

The country, like that through which we passed yesterday, was undulating, with fine downs and excellent pasture. The villages, consisting of a few huts built of adobes, were few and far between. Before the doors of several were placed small stools spread with a white cloth, a sign that there the hungry traveller might break his fast; and at one of these *mesas puestas* we made it a custom every morning to halt, and discuss the usual fare of eggs,

\* Ampudia was appointed commander-in-chief after the recall of Santa Anna from banishment, in July, 1846. (Ed.)

frijoles, and chile. On a large level plain covered with cattle, and better cultivated than is generally the case, stands the Hacienda de la Soledád (of solitude), well named, since it stands alone in the vast plain, the only object which breaks the monotony of the view for many miles. The plain is surrounded by mountains, and the road passes over a stony sierra, thickly covered with the yellow-flowered nopalo, a gigantic species of cactus.

As we were slowly traversing the rocky sierra, we descried, a few hundred yards ahead of us, a band of seven horsemen drawn up across the road. One of my companion's servants, who had been many years a smuggler on this road, instantly recognised them as a well-known band of robbers: we therefore, as their object was plain, collected our *mulada* [pack-train of mules] into a compact body, and, distributing our party of six, half on each side, we unslung our carbines, threw the flaps off our holsters, and steadily advanced, the Spaniard and myself in front, with our pieces cocked and ready for service. The robbers, however, saw at a glance that two of us were foreigners, for whom and their arms they have a great respect, and, wheeling quickly on one side of the road, they hitched their ready lassos on the horns of their saddles, and, remaining in line, allowed us to pass, saluting us with "*Adios, caballeros, buen viaje!* —

a pleasant journey to you"—the leader inquiring of one of the *mozos*, as he passed, whether the *diligencia* was on the road and had many passengers?

They were all superbly mounted, and well armed with carbine, sword, and pistols; and each had a lasso hanging on the horn of his high-peaked saddle. "*Adios, amigos*," we said, as we passed them, "*y buena fortuna*—and good luck this fine morning."

Crossing the sierra, we descended into a level and beautiful champaign, through which meandered a rushing stream, the Rio Lerma. The soil seemed everywhere to be rich and fruitful, but no signs of cultivation appeared until we approached the San Juan del Rio, a town of considerable size, and here the milpas, the maize-fields, looked green and beautiful. The town, when seen from the sierra, as we descended into the plain, looked exceedingly Spanish and picturesque. Indeed, in crossing these vast and uncultivated tracts, anything in the shape of human abode is grateful to the eye; and even the adobe hut of the Indian, with its *mesa puesta*, is a refreshing oasis in these desert solitudes.

San Juan del Rio is very beautifully situated, and surrounded by fine gardens, which are celebrated for grapes and *chirimoyas*. It is difficult

to arrive at anything like a correct estimate of the population of a Mexican town, unless by comparing the size with that of another, the number of whose inhabitants is known; and it is almost impossible to obtain anything like correct information on any statistical point from a Mexican, who, for the glory of his town or province, will invariably give an absurdly exaggerated statement. Thus, on asking in San Juan of a respectable merchant what was the number of its inhabitants, he gravely answered, "*Mas que ochenta mil* — more than eighty thousand;" and on another occasion, on asking the same question of a *rico* [rich man] of Taos, a valley of some twelve thousand inhabitants, he answered without hesitation, "two millions."

At a rough guess I should estimate the population of San Juan del Rio at eight or ten thousand.

The houses are generally of one story, and built of stone, whitewashed, with barred windows,\* the same as in old Spain, looking into the streets. No particular trade appears to be carried on in the town, if we except begging, which here, as everywhere else in the country, is in a most flourishing condition.

We arrived at San Juan about noon, although our day's journey was thirty-five miles; but our

\* The *rejas* of the Moorish houses of Andalusia.

animals were getting more tractable, and travelled with less disorder, and consequently performed the journey quicker, and with less fatigue.

18th.—The road to-day was better than usual, although we passed through a broken country, diversified by mountain, rugged sierras, and fertile plains. Our practice was to start before daylight in the morning, by which means we avoided travelling in the very hot part of the day, stopping to breakfast wherever a "*mesa puesta*" presented itself; our animals, in the meanwhile, travelling on, performing the whole day's journey without stopping, and which, I believe, is the best plan; for a halt of a few minutes does not rest the animals, and the removal of packsaddles from the heated beasts often produces troublesome wounds.

The district in which we were now travelling is situated on the verge of the volcanic region of Jorullo, where, in 1759, occurred one of the most extraordinary phenomena which has ever been observed. A large tract which had long ago been subjected to volcanic action, but for many centuries had been undisturbed, was suddenly the scene of most violent subterraneous commotion.

A succession of earthquakes continued for the space of two months, to the great consternation of the inhabitants, at the end of which time they subsided for a few days, but suddenly recommenced

with frightful subterranean noises and continued shocks. The frightened Indians fled to the neighboring mountains, whence they beheld, with horror and alarm, flames issuing from the plain, which heaved and tossed like a raging sea, rocks and stones being hurled high in air; and suddenly the surface of the plain was seen gradually to rise in the shape of a dome, throwing out at the same time numerous small cones and masses, which rose to an elevation of 1200 and 1400 feet above the original level of the plain.

This is the first of a series of volcanic districts which stretch from the valley of Mexico along the whole of the table-land, at irregular distances from each other.

This morning a village presented itself to us, just as we had given up all hopes of meeting a breakfast, and a promising-looking whitewashed house augured well for our hungry stomachs. Unfortunately some arrieros had been before us, and all we could muster was a *guisado* [stew] of well-picked bones and some chiléd frijoles.

Descending from the sierra, we entered a magnificent plain enclosed by mountains, and arrived at Queretaro at two in the afternoon, distant from San Juan del Rio forty miles, it being the first town of size or note we had yet seen since leaving Mexico.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE LAND OF PULQUE

**Q**UERETARO, the chief city of the department of that name, is well built, and contains many handsome churches and other buildings. Its population is over forty thousand, twelve thousand of whom are Indians. It is surrounded by beautiful gardens and orchards, which produce a great quantity of fruit for the market of the capital. It has several cloth-factories, which employ a considerable number of Indians, but are not in a very flourishing state. An aqueduct of stone conveys water to the city from some springs in the neighborhood. Its chief trade is in the manufacture of cigars of the tobacco of the country.

The tobacco, as in France and Spain, is a government monopoly. The privilege of cultivating the plant is limited to a small extent of country in the departments of Vera Cruz, Puebla, and Oajaca; but lately, on account of its isolated position, and the great distance from the capital, with its consequent difficulty of transport, the territory of New

Mexico is privileged to grow tobacco for its own consumption. The tobacco grown in the above districts is purchased by the government at a stated price, and its manufacture is committed to individuals in different departments. This monopoly, together with that of salt and gunpowder, has always been a source of annoyance to the government, and ill feeling on the part of the people. The revenue produced by the tobacco monopoly does not amount to more than half a million of dollars, owing to the pickings and stealings carried on in this as well as every other government department. If properly managed, it would be the source of a considerable and certain revenue. As it is, little or nothing finds its way into the treasury after the expenses of the concern are paid.—(*Cosa de Mejico.*)\*

The cigars of Queretaro are of a peculiar shape, about three inches long, and square at both ends. To one accustomed to the tobacco of Havana the pungent flavor of the Queretaro cigars is at first disagreeable, but in a short time the taste acquired for this peculiar raciness renders all other tobacco insipid and tasteless. Excellent pulque is made here. A beverage called colinche, expressed from the juice of the tuna (fruit of the prickly

\* The Mexican way. (*Ed.*)

pear), I tasted for the first time. It is of a blood-red color, but of sharp and pleasant flavor.

As we were now in the land *par excellence* of pulque, a short description of this truly national liquor and its manufacture will not be out of place. The maguey, American aloe — *Agave Americana* — is cultivated over an extent of country embracing 50,000 square miles. In the city of Mexico alone the consumption of pulque amounts to the enormous quantity of eleven millions of gallons per annum, and a considerable revenue from its sale is derived by government. The plant attains maturity in a period varying from eight to fourteen years, when it flowers; and it is during the stage of inflorescence only that the saccharine juice is extracted. The central stem which encloses the incipient flower is then cut off near the bottom, and a cavity or basin is discovered, over which the surrounding leaves are drawn close and tied. Into this reservoir the juice distils, which otherwise would have risen to nourish and support the flower. It is removed three or four times during the twenty-four hours, yielding a quantity of liquor varying from a quart to a gallon and a half.

The juice is extracted by means of a siphon made of a species of gourd called acojote, one end

of which is placed in the liquor, the other in the mouth of a person, who by suction draws up the fluid into the pipe and deposits it in the bowls he has with him for the purpose. It is then placed in earthen jars, and a little old pulque — *madre de pulque* — is added, when it soon ferments, and is immediately ready for use. The fermentation occupies two or three days, and when it ceases the pulque is in fine order. . . .

To return to Queretaro. As we entered the town by the *garita*, we saw in a *desague*, or small canal, which ran by the side of and in the very street, a bevy of women and girls “in the garb of Eve,” and in open day, tumbling and splashing in the water, enjoying themselves like ducks in a puddle. They were in no degree disconcerted by the gaze of the passengers who walked at the edge of the canal, but laughed and joked in perfect innocence, and unconsciousness of perpetrating an impropriety. The passers-by appeared to take it as a matter of course, but we strangers, struck with the singularity of the scene, involuntarily reined in our horses at the edge of the water and allowed them to drink, during which we were attacked by the swarthy naiads with laughing and splashing, and shouts of “*Ay que sin vergüenzas!* — what shameless rogues! *Echa-les, muchachas!* — at them, girls; splash the rascals!” — and into our

faces came showers of water, until, drenched to the skin, we were glad to beat a retreat.

We found the town full of troops en route to San Luis Potosi, and had great difficulty in finding a corral for our animals: ourselves we were fain to stow away in a loft above the corral, where, amongst soldiers and arrieros, we passed a flea and bug ridden night.

There was nothing eatable in the house, and we sallied out to the stall of a tortillera in the market-place, where we took a standing supper of frijoles and chile as usual. On presenting a silver dollar in payment, I received eight cakes of soap in change — current coin of Queretaro.\*

“*Valgame Dios!*” I exclaimed as the saponaceous medium was piled into my sombrero.

“*Virgen Purissima! Ave Marial!*” returned the unmoved tortillera; “*y javon el mas blando* — and the softest of soap too” — she added, as I eyed the curious currency. “*Vaya.*”

I had intended to remain a day or two in Queretaro,† but the town was so crowded with

\* “Can it be,” asked the *Athenæum*, in quoting this incident, “can it be on a principle analogous to those of our own statutes against ‘clipping and coining,’ that the integrity of the cake of soap is so religiously respected throughout these wild and hot districts?” (*Ed.*)

† Distance from San Juan del Rio to Queretaro, forty miles.

soldiers of the "liberating army," and the accommodation for man and beast at the *mesones* was so execrable, that I determined to proceed at once.

The next morning, the 19th, our lazy *mozos*, having indulged too freely in pulque the night before, did not make their appearance until 5 A.M.: we therefore made a late start, and were still further delayed by our animals, accustomed to start in the dark, taking it into their heads to explore the town, and persisting in turning down every street but the right one.

Between Queretaro and Celaya the geological features of the country undergo a change, limestone taking the place of the primary and volcanic rocks over which we had till now been passing. We appeared also to be gradually, but perceptibly, descending from the high table-lands, and the climate became warmer and more tropical. The plains are exceedingly beautiful, teeming with fertility, and better cultivated. The gardens and maize-patches of the small Indian villages are enclosed with hedges, or rather walls, of *organo*, a species of single, square-stemmed cactus, which grows to the height of forty and fifty feet. It is called *organo* on account of its resemblance to the pipes of an organ. Planted close together, the walls of *organo* are impervious to pigs and poultry, and form admirable corrals to the In-

dian huts. Here the houses are built of uncemented limestones, piled loosely one on the other, and are sometimes roofed with talc. The road was flooded and impassable, and we were obliged to wade for many miles through a *lagune* [lake], which was very distressing to the animals. The mules frequently sank so deep into the mud that we were obliged to unload the packs before they could extricate themselves.

During the day we passed through El Paseo, a comical little place in the midst of the mud, and surrounded by plantations of magueys. The houses were all without windows, and the inhabitants, mostly Indians, appeared to have no other occupation than making pulque and drinking it. At a house where the usual sign of a maguey-leaf hung at the door, I had a most delicious draught of pulque, fresh from the plant, sparkling and effervescent as champagne, and fifty times more grateful. Magueyes and nopalos \* now lined the road, the latter loaded with fruit. The Indians gather it with long sticks with a fork at one end, in which they secure the tuna.† Near every village, and sometimes at great distances, are seen women and girls under a tree, with enormous piles

\* On a prickly pear I observed a growth of mistletoe (? orchis) with a superb crimson flower.

† Fruit of the prickly pear.

of this refreshing fruit prepared for the mouth by the removal of the prickles. I have seen our *mozos* attack a pyramid of tunas three feet high, and demolish it before I smoked out a cigar. The fruit is full of juice, and is said to be very wholesome and nourishing. I invariably carried a knife and fork in my holsters, and, travelling along, without stopping would make a thrust with my fork at some tempting tuna which overhung the road, and thus quench my thirst in the absence of pulque. The *colinche* made from the juice of the tuna is also very agreeable.

We entered Celaya by a handsome bridge over the Lerma. Inscribed on a stone let into the parapet is a notice to travellers, that the good people of Celaya erected this bridge "*por el beneficio de los viajeros* — for the benefit of the wayfarer,"— which fact they take care shall not be forgotten. Like all Mexican towns, Celaya is full of churches and leperos, and a conspicuous object is the large *collecturia*, a building where the tithes of corn and fruits belonging to the Church are kept. In most villages the *collecturia* stands side by side with the *iglesia*, and is invariably the larger building of the two.

The Carmelite church is an imposing structure of mixed architecture, with Corinthian and Ionic columns. The interior is sombre and gloomy, but



enriched with a great quantity of gold and silver ornaments.

The trade of the town consists in the manufacture of saddles, bridles, and articles of leather required for the road. Population about 7000. Grain of all kinds is most prolific and abundant in the plains of Celaya, and horses and mules are bred in considerable numbers. The distance from Queretaro is thirty-seven miles.

20th.—Leaving Celaya, we passed over a wild and but partially cultivated country, leaving Salamanca on the left. Hares of very large size, and tame as dogs, abound on these plains, and our march to-day was enlivened by an incessant popping of carbines and rifles. In one patch of mezquit, a thorny shrub very common on the plains, I counted seventy hares in a little glade not one hundred yards square, and they were jumping out of the grass at every step of our animals. We breakfasted at a little Indian village called La Xuage, in the comical-looking church of which a grand *funcion* was in progress, and whilst our meal was in preparation we strolled to the iglesia to see what was going on.

The priest, equipped in full uniform, was engaged before the altar praying with open book, and at particular passages gave a signal with his hand behind his back, when half a score of In-

dian boys outside immediately exploded a number of squibs and firewheels, and a bevy of adult Indians fired off their rusty escopetas, the congregation shouting vociferously. At the time when one of the salvos should have taken place, and a huge *trabuco* [blunderbuss] fired off, which was fastened for safety to the door of the church, the padre rushed out in the middle of his discourse and clapped a match to the bunghole, giving a most severe look at the neglectful bombardier, and, banging off the blunderbuss, returned book in hand to the altar, where he resumed his discourse.

The farther we advanced from Mexico the more curious became the provincials in examining "*los extranjeros*" and their equipments. Our hostess in La Xuage, after she had served the eggs and frijoles, rushed to all her female acquaintance with the news that two strangers were in her house, and "*por Dios*" that they should come and see the *güero*. As a "*güero*" I was an object of particular attention. I was examined from head to foot, and the hostess took upon herself to show me off as a jockey would a horse. My hair was exposed to their wonder and admiration; and "*mire,*" added my exhibitor, taking me by the moustache, "*mire sus bigotes, son güeros también*"—and do look here, if his bigotes are not güeros too. "*Valgame Dios!*"

Nothing excited the curiosity and admiration of the men so much as the sight of my arms. My double rifle, and servant's double-barrelled short carbine and pistols, were handled, and almost worshipped. "*Armas tan bonitas*" [arms so good] they had never seen. With such weapons, they all agreed, neither Indian nor Texan, nor *el demonio* [the devil] himself, was to be feared. One old Indian, who told me he had served against all the enemies of the republic, was incredulous when they told him that the guns were double. Half blind, he thrust his fingers into the muzzles, and, assured of the fact, muttered, "*Ave Maria! dos-tiros, dos-tiros! Valgame Dios! dos-tiros, dos-tiros; dos-tiros, dos-balas. Jesus Maria! dos-tiros!*"—all which exclamations hinged upon the extraordinary fact of a gun possessing two barrels and two balls.

After a long journey of nearly fifty miles through an uninteresting country, we arrived at the solitary rancho of Temascaléo, standing alone in a large uninhabited plain, which bears the reputation of being infested with robbers, and "*muy mala gente*" from the towns of Celaya, Salamanca, and Silao.

Mine host of Temascaléo was the beau-ideal of a *ventero*.\* Fat and pulque lined, his heavy

\* Keeper of a small wayside inn. (Ed.)

head, with large fishy eyes, almost sank into his body, his neck, albeit of stout proportion, being inadequate to support its enormous burden. Concealed from his sight behind the sensible horizon of a capacious paunch, a pair of short and elephantine legs shook beneath their load. The stolid heavy look of this mountain of meat was inexpressible. Sitting outside the house in a chair, with a paper cigar in his mouth, he directed the issue of the fodder; his wife, a bustling, busy dame, almost as unwieldy as her spouse, doing the talking part of the business. The only words which appeared able to force their way through his adipose larynx were "*Si, señ-or; No, señ-or,*" from the bottom of his stomach. After supper I paid the worthy couple a visit, and, presenting mine host with a real Havana, it threw him into such a state of excitement and delight that I expected to see him either burst, or subside in an apoplectic fit.

"*Dios mio, Dios mio!*" he grunted; "a *puro* all the way from Havana!" turning it in his hands and kissing it with affection. His wife was called to see it. Was there ever such a beauty of a *puro*? He had not smoked one such for thirty years. Asking me all the news of the war, he remarked that *los Tejanos*, as the Americans are called here, were very bad Indians and cannibals;

that it was horrible to think of such people taking the country. Much better, he said, if the English, who, he had heard, were a very strong and rich nation, with "*muy poco desorden en su gobierno*," — very little disorder in its government — were to take it; and as England was "*poco mas alla de Mejico* — only a little the other side of Mexico;" in fact, a neighbor — it would not be so bad.

A room in the rancho, as is often the case, was fitted up as a little chapel, with a figure of San Miguel, "*imagen muy hermosa y bien pintada* — a very beautiful and well-painted image," they told me; and as this happened to be a "*día de fiesta*," or feast-day, a *funcion* was to be held at nine o'clock in honor of the saint, to which I was duly invited, but declined on the plea of fatigue and sleepiness.

I was roused at midnight by our host, who came to inform me that a band of robbers had just left the house, where they had stopped for a dram, and, after inquiring about my party, had proceeded on the road to Silao. He said he knew them to be *muy mala gente*, and warned me to be on my guard, even that very night, and in the house, "as who knows," he said, "but they may return and murder us all?" However, I was too sleepy to watch, and, merely putting another pair of pistols within my blanket, I was soon in the land

of dreams, where not even a ladrone disturbed me. The next morning one of my mules was found to be so ill that she was unable to carry her pack; and another, belonging to my friend the Spaniard, had given out entirely, and was lying in the corral unable to rise. Her shoes were taken off, and she was left in the hands of the mesonero. My sick mule (she had a bad fistula in the shoulder, which broke out the day after I left Mexico) was relieved by one which I hired at the rancho to carry the pack as far as Silao, where I intended to purchase two or three more.

## CHAPTER X

### MULES AND MARAUDERS

**T**WENTY-FIRST.—We left the rancho late, as we had only twenty-four miles to travel; and moreover we wished to have our little affair with the robbers (which was expected) in broad daylight, and, passing through a fertile but uncultivated plain, reached Silao in the middle of the day.

In Silao I spent the greater part of the day in hunting up and down the town for mules; and, although hundreds were brought to me, there was scarcely one that was not more or less wounded by pack-saddles. It is no uncommon thing to see mules so lacerated by the chafings of the aparejos, that the rib-bones are plainly discernible, and in this state the poor animal is worked without intermission. With proper care an animal may perform the longest journeys under a pack without injury. Although the Mexicans are from childhood conversant with the management of mules, it is astonishing what palpable errors they commit in the care of their beasts. The consequences

of their system were very manifest in our journey to Durango. My companion allowed his *mozos* to treat his animals according to their system, whereas mine were subject to an entirely different one, from which I never permitted the servants to deviate.

On coming in after a journey of forty miles, performed for the most part under a burning sun, my companion's animals were immediately stripped of their saddles, and frequently of large portions of their skin at the same time: they were then instantly taken to water, and permitted to fill themselves at discretion. Mine, on the other hand, remained with loosened girths until they were nearly cool, and were allowed to drink but little at first, although on the road they drank when water presented itself. Before reaching Durango the advantages of the two systems were apparent. The Spaniard lost three mules which died on the road, and all his remaining horses and mules were actually putrefying with sores. My animals arrived at Durango fat and strong, and without a scratch, and performed the journey to Santa Fé in New Mexico, a distance of nearly two thousand miles by the road I took, in fifty-six days, and with ease and comfort.

After rejecting a hundred at least which were brought for my inspection, I purchased a *tronco*



— a pair — of Californian mules, than which no better ever carried saddle or aparejo. This pair, with the two horses I brought with me from Mexico, were the most perfectly enduring animals I ever travelled with. No day was too long, no work too hard, no food too coarse for them. One of the mules, which, from her docility and good temper, I promoted to be my hunting-mule, was a short, stumpy animal, with a very large head and long flapping ears. Many a deer and antelope I killed off her back; and, when hunting, I had only to dismount and throw down the lariat on the ground, and she would remain motionless for hours until I returned. These mules became so attached to my horse Panchito, that it was nearly impossible to separate them; and they would follow me like dogs when mounted on his back. They both crossed the grand prairies with me to the Missouri; and when compelled to part them from poor Panchito, I thought their hearts would have broken.

In the meson of Silao we were literally besieged by representatives from every shop in the town, who poured upon us, offering their wares for sale, and every imaginable article required for "the road." This is the custom in all the towns, and shows the scarcity of regular custom. No sooner does a stranger enter a meson than to it flock

venders of saddles, bridles, bits, spurs, whips, alforjas, sarapes for yourself, rebosos for your ladye-love, sashes, sombreros, boots, silks, and velvets (cotton), and goods of every kind that the town affords. Besides these, Indian women and girls arrive with baskets of fruit — oranges, lemons, grapes, chirimoyas, batatas, platanos, plantains, camotes, granaditas, mamayas, tunas, pears, apples, and fruit of every description. Pulque and colinche sellers are not wanting, all extolling their goods and pressing them on the unfortunate traveller at the same moment, while leperos whine and pray for alms, and lavanderas for your clothes to wash, the whole uniting in such a Babel-like din as outbeggars description. Rid yourself of these, and gangs of a more respectable class throng the door for the express purpose of staring; and this is a most ill-bred characteristic of Mexican manners, and one of the greatest of the many annoyances which beset a traveller.

Silao is notorious for its population of thieves and robbers, who, it is the boast of the place, are unequalled in audacity as well as dexterity. I saw a striking instance of this. A man entered the corral of the meson, and unblushingly offered for sale a pair of wax candles which he had just stolen from a church, boasting of the deed to his

worthy companions, who quite approved the feat.

Silao is on the borders of the departments of Guanajuato and Jalisco, and contains about 5000 inhabitants. The plains in the vicinity produce abundantly wheat, maize, frijoles, barley, &c., and the soil is admirably adapted for the growth of cotton, tobacco, and cochineal.

We were now perceptibly, but very gradually, decreasing our elevation, and the increased temperature was daily becoming more manifest. Jalisco, which we were now entering, belongs to the *tierra caliente*, where all tropical productions *might* be cultivated, but are not. It is on the western declivity of the Cordillera of Anahuac, which may be said to connect the Andes of South and Central America with the great chain of the Rocky Mountains. Jalisco has equal if not greater advantages, in point of soil, climate, and communication with the coast, than any other section of Mexico. The table-land on the western ridge of the Cordillera is exceedingly fertile and enjoys a temperate climate. Here are situated the populous towns of Silao, Leon, Lagos, and Aguas Calientes, in the midst of a most productive champaign. The central portion, of a less elevation and consequently more tropical temperature, which produces cotton, cochineal, and vanilla, as well as every variety of cereal produce, contains

a population for the most part engaged in mines and manufactures. This port has a communication with the Pacific coast by means of the Rio de Santiago or Tololotlan, which flows from the great lake of Chapala, and on which the important city of Guadalajara is situated, with a population of 23,000 or 25,000. The regions near the coast are teeming with fertility, and covered with magnificent forests; but unfortunately the *vomito* here holds its dreaded sway, and the climate is fatal to strangers, and indeed to the inhabitants themselves.

22nd.— From Silao to La Villa de Leon the eye looks in vain for signs of cultivation. On these vast plains day after day we meet no other travelers than the arrieros with their atajos of mules from Durango, Zacatecas, and Fresnillo. These picturesque cavalcades we always hailed with pleasure, as they were generally the bearers of news, *novedades*, from Durango, of Indian attacks and of bands of robbers they had met on the road, which intelligence always put us on the *qui vive*, and made our mozos look very blue. Leon is own brother to Silao, and rivals that town in its celebrity as being prolific in robbers and assassins. Grain of every kind is here very abundant and of excellent quality.

I had a little affair at Leon which was near

proving disagreeable to me, and I have no doubt was anything but pleasant to one of the parties concerned. I had been strolling about nine o'clock in the evening through the plaza, which at that time presents a lively scene, the stalls of the market-people being lighted by fires which are made for that purpose in the square, and which throw their flickering light on the picturesque dresses of the peasantry who attend the market as buyers or sellers, and the still more lively garb of the idle loungers who, wrapped in showy sarapes and cigarros in mouth, loaf at that hour along the streets. Returning from the plaza through a dark narrow street, I was detected as a stranger by a knot of idle rascals standing at the door of a pulque-shop, who immediately saluted me with cries of "*Texano, Texano, que meura*,—let's kill him, the Yankee dog." Wishing to avoid a rencontre with such odds, and with no other means of defence than a bowie-knife, I thought on this occasion that discretion would be much the better part of valor, so I turned off into another dark street, but was instantly pursued by the crowd, who followed yelling at my heels. Luckily an opportune and dark doorway offered me a shelter, and I crouched in it as my pursuers passed with loud cries and knives in hand. The instant that they all, as I imagined, had passed me, I emerged

from my hiding-place, and ran almost into the very arms of three who were bringing up the rear. "*Hi esta, hi esta!*" they shouted, baring their knives and rushing at me. "*Maten le, maten le!*" — here he is, here he is: kill him, kill the jackass." The darkness was in my favor. As the foremost one rushed at me with uplifted blade I stepped quickly to one side, and at the same moment thrust at him with my knife. He stumbled forward on his knees with a cry of "*Dios! me ha matado* — he has killed me" — and fell on his face. One of the remaining two ran to his assistance, the other made towards me; but, finding that I was inclined to compare notes with him and waited his attack, he slackened his pace and declined the encounter. I returned to the meson, and, without telling the Spaniard what had occurred, gave directions for the animals to be ready at midnight, and shortly after we were in the saddle and on our road.

23rd.— From Leon the road ascends a sierra, from the top of which is a magnificent view of the plains of Silao. The mule-path by which we descended is rough and dangerous, and we had to wait on the summit of the sierra until day dawned before we could with safety undertake the descent. The whole country exhibits traces of a volcanic origin; pumice and lava strew the ground, and the sierras are broken into tabular masses of a singu-

lar regularity of outline. One isolated mountain rises abruptly from the plain, and resembles the Table-mountain of the Cape of Good Hope in the general form and regularity of its summit. This tabular form is a characteristic feature in the landscape of these volcanic regions: it is called *mesa*, table, by the Mexicans. Lagos lies at the foot of another sierra, with a lake in the distance, and seen from this elevation the prospect is very beautiful. Far from any habitation, we came upon an old woman sitting under a rock by the roadside, with numerous ollas simmering in the ashes of a fire, containing frijoles and chile, and here we stopped for our usual breakfast.

It was a "*dia de fiesta* [holiday]," and when we entered Lagos we found the population in great excitement, as on the morrow a "*funcion de toros*," a bull-fight, was to take place, and the "*feria*," annual fair, commenced that very night.

The rancheros with their wives and daughters were pouring into the town from far and near, and we had met on the road many families on their way to the fair, forming a very picturesque cavalcade. First the ranchero himself, the pater familias, in glossy sombrero with its gold or silver rolls, calzoneras glittering with many buttons, and snow-white drawers of Turkish dimensions, mounted on a showy horse gaily caparisoned, and

bearing on its croup the smiling, smirking dame in span-new reboso and red or yellow enagua. Next a horse-load or two of muchachitas [girls], their brown faces peeping from the reboso, showing their black eyes and white teeth, as, shining with anticipated delight of the morrow's festivities, and in a state of perfect happiness and enjoyment, they return their acknowledgments to the compliments of the passing *caballeros*. These, in all the glory of Mexican dandyism, armed with scopeta [gun] and machete (sword), and the ever-ready lasso hanging from the saddle-bow, escorted the party, caracolling along on their prancing steeds.

The *diques* — streams which run through the streets — were full of women and girls undergoing preparatory ablution, and dressing their long black hair with various unguents at the side of the water. Pedlers were passing from house to house offering for sale gaudy ornaments to the women, earrings of gold and silver and colored glass, beads of coral and shell from California, amulets and love-charms from the capital, indulgences for peccadilloes committed on the morrow, and suitable for the occasion, the which were in great demand.

In the plaza were numerous gambling-booths, where banks of gold, silver, and copper suited the pockets of every class. Here resorted the wealthy



haciendado with his rouleaus of onzas, the ranchero with his silver pesos, and the lepero with his copper clacos. In one of a middle class, where pesetas were the lowest stake, were congregated a mixture of all classes. The table covered with green cloth displayed tempting lines of gold and silver, surrounded by eager faces. Six women at one end of the room were singing national songs, and occasionally a winner threw them a silver coin, or a loser, for good luck, chucked a peseta over his shoulder to the same destination. Some of the airs were very pretty, although the words were generally pure nonsense. A song which described the courtship of a Mexican beauty by a soldier of Guadalupe was repeatedly encored. Its chorus was the concluding words of the indignant beauty to the presumptuous suitor, and his meek reply:—

*"Soy Mejicana  
De este país.  
Yo, un soldado  
Soy infeliz."*

*"A Mexican girl  
Of this country am I.  
And I a poor soldier,—  
Woe is me!"*

In conclusion, after the aspiring muchacha had run through a long list of the sacrifices she would make if she listened to the suit of the poor soldier, the

lover draws a glowing picture of the delights of a barrack life, the constant change of scene, and its advantages over the monotonous existence of a rancheria. He offers her rebosos of Puebla and enaguas of Potosi, the most retired corner in the quartel, and assures her that all his "*bona robas*" shall be discarded for her sake. This part put me in mind of the beautiful ballad of Zorilla, in which the Moorish knight woos the Christian lady with glowing descriptions of the presents he would make her, of his castle in Grenada, with its beautiful gardens, &c.:—

*"Y si mi Sultana eres,  
Que desiertos mis salones,  
Esta mi harem sin mugeres,  
Mis oidos sin canciones.  
Yo te daré terciopelos,  
Y perfumes orientales.  
De Grecia te traeré velos,  
De Cachemira chales.  
Y te daré blancas plumas  
Para que adornes tu frente,  
Mas blancas que las espumas  
De nuestro mar del oriente.  
Y perlas para el cabello;  
Y baños para el calor;  
Collares para el cuello,  
Por tus labios: AMOR."*

and describes his brown fortress in the plains of Xenil, which will be queen amongst a thousand when it encloses the beautiful Christian:—

*"Que será reina entre mí,  
Cuando encierre tu belleza."*

But with the Mexican muchacha, as with the Christian lady, the rebosos of Puebla, the enaguas of Potosi, or even the retired corner in the barrack-room, have as little effect as the velvets and perfumes of the East, the veils brought from Greece, the Cashmere shawls, and the grey fortress in Grenada, had with the fair lady, who valued more her towers of Leon than the Moor's Grenada:—

*"Que mis torres de Leon  
Valen mas que tu Grenada."*

"My Leon towers I doubly prize,  
Than all the plains of thy Grenada."

24th.—We left Lagos for La Villa de la Encarnacion (forty miles), through a barren and uninteresting country, destitute of trees, and the vegetation sparse and burned up. The road was up and down sierras the whole day, scattered with nopalo and prickly pear; the heat tremendous, and the sun's rays, reflected from the rocky sierra, fiery and scorching. We crossed a river which washes the walls of the town, by a ford on the right of a ruined bridge, destroyed during the War of Independence, and never rebuilt. This town was the first I saw in which all the houses

were of adobes (sunburnt bricks). It exactly resembled the sketch of Timbuctoo as given in René Caillé's book, and its appearance, as might be expected, was miserable in the extreme. As we passed the quaint-looking church, with its bells swung high in air, the organ was playing a crashing polka — a *funcion* at the time being in progress inside, and groups of leperos kneeling in the enclosed space in front.

Amongst the beggars, who as usual attended our levee on arrival, was a lepero without even the rudiments of legs, who dragged himself along the ground on his stomach like a serpent, and had a breastplate of leather for the purpose of protecting his body from the rough stones over which he crawled. This disgusting wretch took up his position in the corral, and, as it cost him no little labor to crawl thus far, seemed determined to sicken us out of a coin. The night was so hot and close that I placed my blanket in the *balcon* which ran round the rooms, which in this meson were above the stables, and ascended by wooden steps. Being very tired, I had turned in early, and was in a pleasant doze, when I imagined I heard a dog which belonged to my companion, and which had on leathern shoes to protect its feet, scraping or scratching near me. Thinking the animal, which was a great favorite, wanted to

lie down on my blanket, I called to it to come and lie down, saying, "*Ven aca, pobrecito, ven aca* — Come here, poor fellow, come here." I immediately felt something at my side, and, lazily opening my eyes, what was my intense horror and disgust at seeing the legless lepero crawling on my bed! Human nature could not stand it. "*Maldito!*" I roared out, "*afuera* — get out!" and, gathering up my leg, kicked him from me. I did not recover from my disgust until I saw the wretch crawling across the corral and out of the gate. He had come to beg or steal; and, of course imagining from my words that I was charitably inviting him to share my blanket, was thus unceremoniously ejected from the balcony.

## CHAPTER XI

### IN THE MINING COUNTRY

**T**WENTY-FIFTH.—To Aguas Calientes, a very pretty town, with some handsome buildings. We met a gypsying or picnic party on the road, mounted on borricos [asses], with a mule packed with comestibles. A bevy of very pretty girls brought up the rear, under the escort of half-a-dozen exquisites of the town, got up in the latest fashion of the capital. Their monopoly of such a fair troop was not to be borne, and with tolerable impudence we stopped the party. The dandies, from our sunburnt and road-stained appearance and bristling arms, at once set us down as robbers, and without more ado turned their donkeys and retreated, leaving us masters of the field and the fair. With them our peace was soon made, and we received a pressing invitation to join the party, which, however, we were fain to decline, as our horses were sorely tired. They laughed heartily at the panic of their gallant escort, who were huddled together at a little distance, not knowing whether to advance

or retreat. I sent my mozo to them to say that the ladies required their presence; and we rode on to the town, where we found our mulada arrived and waiting our approach.

In Aguas Calientes I was accosted by a negro, a runaway slave from the United States. He informed me he was cook at the house where the diligencia stopped, and that if I chose he would prepare a dinner for us,— roast-beef, &c., and all the “fixings” of an American feed. I gladly made the bargain, and proceeded to the house at the time appointed, but found the rascal had never been there, and dinner there was none.

In the plaza is a column erected to some patriot or another, which is pointed out to the stranger as being *muy fino*. The pedestal is surmounted by geese with long claws like an eagle's, and hairy heads of dogs stick out of the sides. The most absurd thing I ever saw.

25th.—To the hacienda of La Punta, in a large plain where are several other plantations, and two rancherias celebrated as being the abode of a band of robbers called *picos largos*—longbills. In this day's journey of forty miles one of the horses died from fatigue and heat, and two others were scarcely able to finish the day's journey.

26th.—To Zacatecas, through wild uncultivated plains and sierras. On the road we passed

some abandoned copper-mines, where an old Indian was picking for stray pieces of ore, of which a dream had promised the discovery.

ZACATECAS, a populous city of between 30,000 and 40,000 inhabitants, is in the midst of one of the most valuable mining districts in Mexico. The country round it is wild and barren, but the rugged sierras teem with the precious metals. Near the town are several lakes or lagunes, which abound in muriate and carbonate of soda. The town itself is mean and badly built, the streets narrow and dirty, and the population bear a very bad character; which indeed is the case in all the mining-towns in the country, which is but natural from the very nature of their employment.\*

From this point the *novedades* poured upon us daily: "*Los Indios! los Indios!*" was the theme of every conversation. Thus early (it was a very early Indian season this year and the last) they had made their appearance in the immediate vicinity of Durango, killing the paisanos [countrymen], and laying waste the haciendas and ranchos; and it was supposed they would penetrate even farther into the interior. What a *cosa de Mejico* is this fact! Five hundred savages depopulating a *soi-disant civilised* country, and with impunity!

27th.—The road from Zacatecas to Fresnillo

\* From Hacienda de la Punta to Zacatecas, fifty miles.



lies through a wild uncultivated country without inhabitants. We met a *conducta* from the mines of Fresnillo, bearing bars of silver to the mint at Zacatecas. The wagon in which it was carried was drawn by six mules galloping at their utmost speed. Eight or ten men, with muskets between their knees, sat in the wagon, facing outwards, and as many more galloped alongside, armed to the teeth. Bands of robbers, three or four hundred strong, have been known to attack *conductas* from the mines, even when escorted by soldiers, engaging them in a regular stand-up fight.

Fresnillo is a paltry dirty town, with the neighboring sierra honeycombed with mines, which are rich and yield considerable profits. A share which the government had in these mines yielded an annual revenue of nearly half a million of dollars; but that short-sighted vampire, which sucks the blood of poor Mexico, eager to possess all the golden eggs at once, sold its interest for less than one year's income. *Cosa de Mejico*, here as everywhere!

We were here very kindly invited to take up our abode, during our stay, in the hacienda of the mines; the administrador of which is an American, and the officers mostly Spaniards. Enjoying their hospitality, we spent two or three days very pleasantly, and were initiated into all the mysteries of

mining. The process of extracting the metal from the ore is curious in the extreme, but its description would require more science than I possess, and more space than I am able to afford. Two thousand mules are at daily work in the *hacienda de beneficos*, and 2500 men are employed in the mines. From this an idea may be formed of the magnitude of the works. The main shaft is 1200 feet in depth, and a huge engine is constantly employed removing water from the mines. This vast mass of machinery appeared to take care of itself, for I saw neither engineers nor others in the engine-house. There are many Cornishmen employed in the mines, who drink and fight considerably, but withal find time to perform double as much work as the Mexicans. The *patio* or yard of the *hacienda de beneficos*, where the porphyritic crushing-mills are at work, contains 32,000 square yards. In undergoing one process, the crushed ore, mixed with copper and salt, is made into enormous mud puddings, and trodden out by mules, which are back deep in the paste; indeed, the whole process of the beneficio, a purely chemical one, is most curious and worthy of attention.

The miners are a most dissolute and vicious class of men, and frequently give great trouble to the officers of the hacienda. But for the firmness and presence of mind of the administrador, the

American gentleman before alluded to, the miners on more than one occasion would probably have sacked the hacienda.

The Cornishmen, however, can always be relied on, their only fault being the love of fighting and whisky; and a dépôt of arms is kept in the hacienda ready for any emergency.

On a bare rock, which is entirely destitute of soil, the miners have formed a most beautiful and productive garden, the soil with which it is made having been conveyed to the spot on the backs of mules and donkeys; it is now luxuriant and thriving, although, I believe, but two years old, and is full of fruit-bearing trees of every description. In the centre is a fountain and ornamental summer-house, and, curiously enough, this garden is the resort of flocks of humming-birds, which are rarely found on the neighboring plains.

On the road between Zacatecas and Fresnillo, as I was jogging gently on, a Mexican mounted on a handsome horse dashed up and reined in suddenly, doffing his sombrero and saluting me with a "*Buenos días, caballero.*" He had ridden from Zacatecas for the purpose of trading with me for my sword, which he said he had heard of in that town as being something *muy fino*. Riding up to my left side, and saying, "*Con su licencia, caballero* — by your leave, my lord" — he drew the

sword from its scabbard, and, flourishing it over his head, executed a neat demivolte to one side, and performed some most complicated manœuvres. At first I thought it not unlikely that my friend might take it into his head to make off with the sword, as his fresh and powerful animal could easily have distanced my poor tired steed, so I just slipped the cover from the lock of my carbine, to be ready in case of need. But the Mexican, after concluding his exercise, and having tried the temper of the blade on a nepalo, rode up and returned the sword to its scabbard with a low bow, offering me at the same time his horse in exchange for it, and, when that was of no avail, another and another; horses, he assured me, "*de la mejor sangre* — of the best blood of the country," and of great speed and strength.

On the 30th we left Fresnillo, having a journey of fifty-five miles before us to Zaina. The country is desolate and totally uncultivated, excepting here and there where a solitary hacienda or rancho is seen; these are all fortified, for we were now entering the districts which are annually laid waste by the Comanches. The haciendas are all surrounded by walls, and flanked with towers loop-holed for musketry. A man is always stationed on an eminence in the vicinity, mounted on a fleet horse, on the look-out for Indians; and on their

approach a signal is given, and the peones, the laborers employed in the *milpas*, run with their families to the hacienda, and the gates are then closed and preparations made for defence.

This morning I gave my horse Panchito a run, *suelto*, amongst the mules and loose animals, mounting Bayou Lobo, the *tierra caliente* horse which gave my mozo so severe a fall the day we left the capital. I had dismounted to tighten the girths a short time after leaving Fresnillo, and before daylight, when, on remounting, the animal as usual set off full gallop, and, being almost imprisoned in my sarape, which confined my arms and legs, in endeavoring to throw my right leg over the saddle I pitched over on the other side and fell upon the top of my head, at the same moment that the horse kicked out and struck with great force on my left ear. I lay in the road several hours perfectly insensible; my servant imagined I was dead, and, dragging me on one side, rode on to overtake the Spaniard. However, showing signs of life, they placed me again in the saddle, and I rode on for several hours in a state of unconsciousness. My jaw was knocked on one side, and when I recovered I had hard work to pull it into its former position: for days, however, I was unable to open it further than to admit a fork or a spoon; and as I had to ride forty-five miles the same day that

I met with the accident, and under a burning sun, I thought myself fortunate in not being disabled altogether.

Zaina is a very pretty little town surrounded with beautiful gardens. It is an isolated spot, and has little or no communication with other towns.

*Oct. 1st.*— To Sombrerete, distance thirty-four miles. The country became wilder, with less fertile soil, and entirely depopulated, as much from fear of Indians as from its natural unproductiveness. Sombrerete was once a mining-place of some importance, and the *Casa de la Diputacion de Minería*, a large handsome building, is conspicuous in the town. The sierra is still worked, but the veins are not productive. The *veta negra de Sombrerete*, the famous black vein of Sombrerete, yielded the greatest bonanzas \* of any mine on the continent of America. It is now exhausted.

*2nd.*— We left the usual road, and struck across the country to the Hacienda de San Nicolas, as I was desirous of passing through the tract of country known as the Mal Pais, a most interesting volcanic region, a perfect *terra incognita* even to Mexicans; and as to travellers, such *rara aves* are as little known in these parts as in Timbuctoo.

\* When a rich vein or lode is struck in a mine yielding a large quantity of ore, such a fortunate event is termed "bonanza."

We journeyed through a perfect wilderness of sierra, and chapparal thickly covered with nopales and mezquite, which now became the characteristic tree. The high rank grass was up to our horses' bellies, and, matted with the bushes of mezquite and prickly pear, was difficult to make our way through. Hares and rabbits and javali, a species of wild hog, abounded, with quail and partridge, and many varieties of pigeons and doves. We passed on our left hand a curiously formed ridge, and a pyramidal hill which stood isolated in the plain, such as the ancient Mexicans made use of as pedestals for their temples, and which have been ingeniously described as artificial structures by writers on Mexican antiquities. This day's journey was long and fatiguing, as we had to make our way for the most part across a trackless country, striking a mule-path only within about fifteen miles of the hacienda. Our animals were completely exhausted when we reached it, having performed nearly sixty miles during the day.

The Hacienda de San Nicolas is one of those enormous estates which abound in every part of Mexico, and which sometimes contain sixty and eighty square miles of land. Of course not a hundredth part is under cultivation; but on some, immense herds of horses, mules, and cattle roam almost wild, or rather *did* roam, for the Indians have

carried off incredible numbers. The hacienda itself is generally surrounded by the huts of the peones. The laborers who are employed on the plantation exist in a kind of serfdom to the owners, and their collection of adobe hovels forms almost a town of itself. The hacendados live in almost feudal state, having their hundreds of retainers, and their houses fortified to repel the attacks of Indians or other enemies.

On riding up to the gate of the hacienda we surprised two of the señoritas in dishabille, smoking their cigarros of hoja — corn-shucks — on a stone bench in front of the house; they instantly ran off like startled hares, so unexpected was the apparition of strange caballeros with a retinue of mozos, and, banging to the gate, reconnoitred us through the chinks. Nothing would induce them to reappear, so we withdrew, and sent one of the mozos on the forlorn hope of procuring admittance. With him they parleyed through the gate, and informed us, through him, that, as their padre was from home, they were unable to receive us within the castle, but that a stable was *à la disposition de los caballeros*, and a *quarto* [small house], used sometimes as a hen-house, and at others as a calf-pen, should be cleaned for their reception. With this we were fain to be content, and, as there was ample provision for our tired



beasts, and a good corral, had no reason to complain, as sleeping in the air was no hardship in this climate.

Presently, with the compliments of the ladies, an excellent supper made its appearance, comprising a *guisado* of hare, frijoles, eggs, &c., and a delicious salad prepared by the fair hands of the señoritas, and their regrets at the same time that the absence of their señor prevented them from having the pleasure of affording better accommodation.

3rd.—Our road lay through the Mal Pais—the evil land (as volcanic regions are called by the Mexicans), which has the appearance of having been, at a comparatively recent period, the theatre of volcanic convulsions of an extraordinary nature. The convexity of the disturbed region enables one to judge of the extent of the convulsion, which reaches from the central crater to a distance of twelve or fourteen miles.

The valley between two ridges or sierras is completely filled up to nearly a level with the sierra itself; it is therefore impossible to judge of the height of the tract of ground raised by the volcano. The crater is about five or six hundred yards in circumference, and filled with a species of dwarf oak, mezquite, and cocoa trees, which grow out of the crevices of the lava. In it is a

small stagnant lake, the water of which is green and brackish; huge blocks of lava and scoria surround the lake, which is fringed with rank shrubs and cactus. It is a dismal, lonely spot, and the ground rumbles under the tread of the passing horse. A large crane stood with upraised leg on a rock in the pool, and a javali (wild pig) was wallowing near it in the mud. Not a breath of air ruffled the inky surface of the lake, which lay as undisturbed as a sheet of glass, save where here and there a huge water-snake glided across with uplifted head, or a duck swam slowly out from the shadow of the shrub-covered margin, followed by its downy progeny.

I led my horse down to the edge of the water, but he refused to drink the slimy liquid, in which frogs, efts, and reptiles of every kind were darting and diving. Many new and curious water-plants floated near the margin, and one, lotus-leaved, with small delicate tendrils, formed a kind of net-work on the water, with a superb crimson flower, which exhibited a beautiful contrast with the inky blackness of the pool. The Mexicans, as they passed this spot, crossed themselves reverently, and muttered an Ave Maria; for in the lonely regions of the Mal Pais, the superstitious Indian believes that demons and gnomes, and spirits of evil purposes have their dwelling-places, whence they not

unfrequently pounce upon the solitary traveller, and bear him into the cavernous bowels of the earth. The arched roof of the prison-house resounding to the tread of their horses as they pass the dreaded spot, they mutter rapidly their prayers, and handle their amulets and charms to keep off the treacherous bogies who invisibly beset the path.

The surrounding country is curiously disturbed, and the flow of the molten lava can easily be traced, with its undulations, even retaining the exact form of the ripple as it flowed down from the crater. Hollow cones appear at intervals like gigantic petrified bubbles, and extend far into the plain. Some of these, in shape like an inverted cup, are rent, and present large fissures, while others are broken in two, one half only remaining, which exhibit the thickness of the shell of basaltic lava to be only from one to three feet.

We arrived at the rancho of La Punta in the afternoon, in time to witness the truly national sport of the *coléa de toros* — in English, bull-tailing — for which some two or three hundred rancheros were assembled from the neighboring plantations.

This rancho, in the fall of last year, was visited by the Comanches, who killed several of the unfortunate peones, whom they caught in the road

and at work in the milpas, and carried off all the stock belonging to the farm. On the spot where the rancheros were killed and scalped, crosses are erected, and the little piles of stones, which almost bury them, testify to the numerous Ave Marias and Pater Nosters which their friends have uttered when passing, in prayer for their souls in purgatory, and for each prayer have deposited at the foot of the cross the customary stone.

Without warning, the Indians one day suddenly appeared on the sierra, and swooped down upon the rancho. The men immediately fled and concealed themselves, leaving the women and children to their fate. Those who were not carried away were violated, and some pierced with arrows and lances and left for dead. The ranchero's wife described to me the whole scene, and bitterly accused the men of cowardice in not defending the place. This woman, with two grown daughters and several smaller children, fled from the rancho before the Indians approached, and concealed themselves under a wooden bridge which crossed a stream near at hand. Here they remained for some hours, half dead with terror: presently some Indians approached their place of concealment: a young chief stood on the bridge and spoke some words to the others. All this time he had his piercing eyes bent upon their hiding-place, and

had no doubt discovered them, but concealed his satisfaction under an appearance of indifference. He played with his victims. In broken Spanish they heard him express his hope "that he would be able to discover where the women were concealed — that he wanted a Mexican wife and some scalps." Suddenly he jumped from the bridge and thrust his lance under it with a savage whoop; the blade pierced the woman's arm and she shrieked with pain. One by one they were drawn from their retreat.

"*Dios de mi alma!* — what a moment was this!" said the poor creature. Her children were surrounded by the savages, brandishing their tomahawks, and she thought their last hour was come. But they all escaped with life, and returned to find their house plundered, and the corpses of friends and relations strewn the ground.

"*Ay de mi!* — what a day was this! *Y los hombres,*" she continued, "*qui no son hombres?* — And the men — who are *not* men — where were they? *Escondidos como los ratones* — hidden in holes like the rats. *Mire!*" she said, suddenly, and with great excitement: "look at these two hundred men, well mounted and armed, who are now so brave and fierce, running after the poor bulls; if twenty Indians were to make their appearance, where would they be? *Vaya, vaya!*" she exclaimed;

"*son cobrades*" — they are cowards all of them.

The daughter, who sat at her mother's feet during the recital, as the scenes of that day were recalled to her memory, buried her face in her mother's lap, and wept with excitement.

To return to the *toros*. In a large corral, at one end of which was a little building, erected for the accommodation of the lady spectators, were enclosed upwards of a hundred bulls. Round the corral were the horsemen, all dressed in the picturesque Mexican costume, examining the animals as they were driven to and fro in the enclosure, in order to make them wild for the sport — *alzar el corage*. The *ranchero* himself, and his sons, were riding amongst them, armed with long lances, separating from the herd, and driving into another enclosure, the most active bulls. When all was ready, the bars were withdrawn from the entrance of the corral, and a bull driven out, who, seeing the wide level plain before him, dashed off at the top of his speed. With a shout, the horsemen pursued the flying animal, who, hearing the uproar behind him, redoubled his speed. Each urges his horse to the utmost, and strives to take the lead and be the first to reach the bull. In such a crowd, of course, first-rate horsemanship is required to avoid accidents and secure a safe lead. For some minutes the troop ran on in a compact

mass — a sheet could have covered the lot. Enveloped in a cloud of dust, nothing could be seen but the bull, some hundred yards ahead, and the rolling cloud. Presently, with a shout, a horseman emerged from the front rank; the women cried "*viva!*" as, passing close to the stage, he was recognised to be the son of the ranchera, a boy twelve years of age, sitting his horse like a bird, and swaying from side to side as the bull doubled, and the cloud of dust concealed the animal from his view. "*Viva Pepito! viva!*" shouted his mother, as she waved her reboso, to encourage the boy; and the little fellow struck his spurs into his horse, and doubled down to his work manfully. But now two others are running neck and neck with him, and the race for the lead, and the first throw, is most exciting. The men shout, the women wave their rebosos, and cry out their names: "*Alza — Bernardo — por mi amor, Juan Maria — Viva Pepitito!*" they scream in intense excitement. The boy at length loses the lead to a tall fine-looking Mexican, mounted on a fleet and powerful roan stallion, who gradually, but surely, forges ahead.

At this moment the sharp eyes of little Pepe observed the bull to turn at an angle from his former course, which movement was hidden by the dust from the leading horseman. In an instant

the boy took advantage of it, and, wheeling his horse at a right angle from his original course, cut off the bull. Shouts and vivas rent the air at sight of this skilful manœuvre, and the boy, urging his horse with whip and spur, ranged up to the left quarter of the bull, bending down to seize the tail, and secure it under his right leg, for the purpose of throwing the animal to the ground. But here Pepe's strength failed him in a feat which requires great power of muscle, and in endeavoring to perform it he was jerked out of his saddle, and fell violently to the ground, stunned and senseless. At least a dozen horsemen were now striving hard for the post of honor, but the roan distanced them all, and its rider, stronger than Pepe, dashed up to the bull, threw his right leg over the tail, which he had seized in his right hand, and, wheeling his horse suddenly outwards, upset the bull in the midst of his career, and the huge animal rolled over and over in the dust, bellowing with pain and fright.

This exciting but dangerous sport exhibits the perfect horsemanship of the Mexicans to great advantage. Their firm yet graceful seat excels everything I have seen in the shape of riding, and the perfect command which they have over their horses renders them almost a part of the animals they ride. Their seat is quite different from the



“park-riding” of Mexico. The sport of *coléa* lasts as long as a bull remains in the corral, so that at the conclusion, as may be imagined, the horses are perfectly exhausted.

Another equestrian game is *el gallo* — the cock. In this cruel sport, an unfortunate rooster is tied by the legs to a tree, or to a picket driven in the ground, with its head or neck well greased. The horsemen, starting together, strive to be the first to reach the bird, and, seizing it by the neck, to burst the thongs which secure it, and ride off with the prize. The well-greased neck generally slips through the fingers of the first who lay hold of it; but, as soon as one is in possession, he rides off, pursued by the rest, whose object is to rescue the fowl. Of course in the contest which ensues the poor bird is torn to pieces; the scraps of the body being presented by the fortunate possessors as a *gâge d'amour* to their mistresses.

The people in the rancho were so poor in comestibles, that we supped that night on beans and bread, and made our beds afterwards outside the door, where all night long continued such a clatter of women's tongues, such grunting of pigs, barking of curs, braying of borricos, &c., that I was unable to sleep until near morning, when, before daylight, we were again in our saddles.

*Oct. 4th.*—At daybreak we came to a river,

which, in the absence of a ferry, we swam with all our animals, both packed and loose. We passed through a flat country, entirely inundated, and alive with geese and gruyas. The latter bird, of the crane species, is a characteristic feature in the landscape of this part of Mexico. The corn-fields are visited by large flocks, and, as they fly high in the air, their peculiar melancholy note is constantly heard, both in the day and night, booming over the plains.

DUBANGO, the metropolis of northern Mexico, is situated near the root of the Sierra Madre, at the north-western corner of a large plain, poorly cultivated and sparsely inhabited. It is a picturesque city, with two or three large churches and some government buildings "fair to the eye but foul within," with a population of 18,000, 17,000 of whom are rogues and rascals. Like all other Mexican cities, it is extremely dirty in the exterior, but the houses are clean and tidy within, always excepting government buildings. It is celebrated for its scorpions and bad pulque, and the enormous mass of malleable iron which rises isolated in the plain, about three miles from the town. This rock is supposed to be an *aërolite*, as its composition and physical character are identical with certain *aërolites* which fell in 1751 in some part of Hungary, and analogous to the gen-

eral character of others of the same nature, of which the aërolitic origin is equally certain and authenticated. It contains 75 per cent. of pure iron, according to the analysis of a Mexican chemist; and some specimens, which Humboldt procured, were analysed by the celebrated Klaproth, with, I believe, the same result.

Durango is distant from the city of Mexico 500 miles in a due course, or as the bird flies, but by the road must be upwards of 650; my reckoning makes it 665 — many miles, I have no doubt, too much or too little. Its elevation, according to Humboldt, is 6845 feet above the level of the sea, while that of Mexico is 7470, and La Villa de Leon 6027 feet; thus showing that the table-land of Mexico does not decline so suddenly as is imagined. Indeed, excepting in the plains of Salamanca and Silao, there is no perceptible difference in the temperature, and I believe, in reality, but little of elevation, in the vast region between the capital and Chihuahua.

Snow falls here occasionally, and the mercury is sometimes seen below the freezing point. For the greater part of the year, however, the heat is excessive, when a low intermittent fever is prevalent, but rarely fatal.

Durango is the seat of a bishopric, and the worthy prelate lately undertook a journey to

Santa Fé, in New Mexico, which progress created a furore amongst the devout; and the good old man was glad to return with any hem to his garment, so great was the respect paid to him. That he escaped the Apaches and Comanches is attributed to a miracle: the unfaithful assign the glory to his numerous escort.— *Quien sabe?*

The City of Scorpions (as it is called) was in dread and expectation of an Indian invasion during my stay. Some five hundred Comanches were known to be in the vicinity towards the *north-east*; so, after a fanfarron of several days, and high mass in the church for the repose of those who were going to be killed, &c., the troops and valientes of the city, with beating drums and flying colors, marched out to the *south-west*, and happened to miss "*los barbaros*." However, it saved them a sound drubbing, and the country the valientes who would have been killed; so the fatality was not much regretted, at least by the military, and the people of this time are accustomed to these "chances."— *Cosas de Mejico*.

There is an English merchant in Durango, and one or two Germans and Americans. Their hospitality is unbounded. There is also a mint, the administrador of which is a German gentleman, who has likewise established a cotton-factory near the city, which is a profitable concern: *y de mas* —

(and moreover) — *las Durangüenas son muy halagüenas* — (the ladies of Durango are very pretty).

I stayed in the house of the widow of a Gachupin, whose motherly kindness to me, and excellent cooking taught her by her defunct *sposo*, is one of the most pleasurable memories I bear with me from Mexico, where a bastard and miserable imitation of the inimitable Spanish cuisine exists in all its deformity.

## CHAPTER XII.

### TRIALS OF THE ROAD

**T**RAVELLING in Mexico may be divided into two heads, viz. *en grande* (or *en prince*, as they say in France), or in the style of the *hombre de jaqueta*, which, however, although considered *infra dig.* in Spain, is, as far as the garment is concerned, the only correct costume for the road in Mexico. The wealthy haciendado of the *tierra caliente* rolls along in his *carretela* drawn by half a dozen mules, his lady in more luxurious *littera*, while the gentlemen and *solteros* of the family — the bachelors — prance at the sides of the litter, mounted on their Puebla hacks, and arrayed in all the glory of buttons and embroidery.

If the object be to see the country, and become acquainted with the people and their manners and customs, the traveller should, in the first place, leave in charge of the steward of the royal mail steam-ship, at Vera Cruz or Tampico, his English reserve and prejudice in the pocket of his tweed shooting-jacket; all of which, together with his

Lincoln and Bennet and cockney notions, he must at once discard before leaving the steamer. Then, having donned a broad-brimmed Panama and white linen roundabout, he may forthwith deliver his letter to his consignee, and make up his mind to the enjoyment of unbounded hospitality for as long as he pleases; and the longer, the better pleased his entertainers: for here, it may be remarked, amongst the foreigners, the most genuine hospitality makes the stranger immediately at home, even in the city of the dreaded *vomito*.

Here, if he has the good fortune to possess, at the bottom of an introductory letter, the talismanic "open sesame" of Messrs. Coutts and Co., he will find that he has fallen on his legs indeed; and at the *casa* of *los señores* M ——— and M ——— he will be put in the way of equipping himself for any mode of travelling, whether *por diligencia*, by dilly; *à caballo*, on horseback; or by lazy *littera*: in which last luxurious conveyance he can travel to Jalapa, and smoke and dream away his time, through the most picturesque scenery of the *tierra caliente*, which, of course, through the pendent curtains, he cannot get a glimpse of.

If, too, Castillo, that prince of *mozos*, should happen, at the time of his departure, to have an inclination to visit his soft-eyed *Jalapeña*, he may be as lucky as I was in securing his *ciceroneship*

as far as the "City of the Mist"; whence to the capital the coach is the safest and surest mode of transit.

From Mexico to the north, a large escort is necessary to protect the traveller from the exactions of *los caballeros del camino* — the highwaymen; and if the journey is continued still farther towards the pole, a respectable force is absolutely indispensable, if he wish to arrive at his journey's end with the hair on the top of his head; for my passage, *sin novedad*,\* through that turbulous country is to be attributed alone to extraordinary good fortune, and so sharp a look-out as to render the journey anything but a mere pleasure-trip. Indeed, the traveller in any part of Mexico must ever bear in mind the wholesome Yankee saying, "Keep your primin' dry, and your eye skinned." It is not even saying too much to advise those who have never served an apprenticeship of hard knocks, and who would find no little difficulty in adopting their fastidious *cuerpos* (bodies) to the rough-and-tumble life they must necessarily lead, to confine their rambles to the well-steamed Rhine, or within the radius of the Messageries Royales and Lafitte's.

It must be some time after the termination of the present war before the country will be fit to

\* In this case, without *fatal accident*. (Ed.)



travel over; for woe to the luckless wight whose turnip complexion and hair of the carrot's hue proclaim him to be of Anglo-Saxon race, should he fall into the hands of a marauding party of disbanded soldiers! and the present bitter feeling of hostility to foreigners must pass away before it will be safe to show one's nose outside the gates of the larger cities.

The usual mode of travelling long distances, by even the wealthiest of the male class, is invariably on horse or mule back, several sumpter-mules being packed with the *catre* (bedstead), *alforjas* (saddle-bags), *cantin* (a portable canteen), bed, blankets, provisions, &c.; whilst half a dozen servants — *mozos* — well mounted and armed, escort their lords and masters. The usual pay of these is one dollar a-day each, four shillings and a fraction of our money, with board wages of two rials — *dos riales diarios por la comida* — for which they always stipulate, saying that not even a lepero could live for less, a rial being equivalent to about sixpence. One of these is appointed captain, and to him is intrusted the payment of the road expenses, out of which, if he be "*hombre de bien*," i.e. an approved rascal, he manages to pouch another daily dollar, as perquisite for the confidence which he is supposed not to abuse.

This rascal, or major-domo, if allowed to rob

his master quietly and genteelly, is worthy of every trust, and will take especial care that his privilege is not trespassed upon by others; therefore, says the proverb-loving Mexican, "*Mas vale un ladrón que viene pícaros*,— give me one honest robber before twenty rogues;" a distinction finely drawn upon the meaning of the terms.

"*Que comedor de maíz es aquel macho! valgame Dios, que cabe mas que tres almudas!* What a corn-eater is that little mule," said my mozo to me one day; "Heaven save me, but he holds three almudas (about six pecks) at a bout! He is the one to eat. Every day he eats the same. Oh! what a *macho* is that!"

Every traveller has his *macho*, who eats treble allowance, or rather who eats one ration, while the price of the two imaginary ones finds its way into the pocket of the mozo.

The captain is also invariably in league with the mesonero of the hostelry where you put up for the night; and his recommendations of extra feeds rouse you, rolled in sarape, as, hat in hand, he stands at the door of the quarto, with mine host looking over his shoulder, saying,—

"*Valgame, Don Jorge, que tengan mucha hambre las bestias! ya se acabo la cena: quiere su merced que les echo mas maíz?* — God save me,

Mr. George, what hungry bellies the animals have to-night! — they have already gobbled up their suppers: will your worship please that I give them some more corn? *Mañana tenemos jornada muy largita, es preciso que comen bien* — To-morrow we have a long little journey before us, and they had better eat plenty to-night."

"*Vaya! maldito,*" cries the tormented *amo*; "*que comen mil fanegas si pueden!* — Go to the devil, and let them eat a thousand sacks if they can!" — and, covering his head with his sarape, soon snores, while his trustworthy mozo puts the price of two almudas in his pocket, and mine host the third for his share of the transaction.

Thus it may be supposed that here the old adage is carried out which says that "*con el ojo del amo se engorda el buey* — with the master's eye the steer is fattened;" and the traveller who loves to see his well-worked animals in good case, and dislikes to draw his pursestrings every three or four days to pay for another and another fresh horse or mule, had better follow my practice, which was to put a *puro* in my mouth, take up a position on the manger, and watch that every measure was well filled, and eaten, before I paid attention to the wants of my own proper carcass, taking care to give but half the complement of corn at first, re-

serving the remainder for night, and in the interval seeing that all the beasts were led to water for the second time.

Heaven help the wight who trusts a Mexican! The following is the bill presented to me by my mozo the first and only time I ever trusted him with the office of paymaster; and beneath is the amended or taxed bill, or rather the account of the night's expenditure as wrung from the unwilling mesonero after I had accused my worthy steward of peculation, and threatened summary chastisement. The copy is verbatim:—

*"Pago José Maria En el meson De la santisma vergen de guadalaxara Dos dias de comida Para El 4 reales dos Fanegas de mais cuatro Pesos y otras dos 4 pesos entrada de nueve Bestias dos Por una tres Reales tres comidas por mi cabayero dos Pesos por mi cabayero otra 3 Riales tres riales otra otra tres por mi cabayero cinco quartios pulque por mi cabayero paja nueve riales un medio por pulque otro mismo quarto tres dias 6 riales quarto un dia 2 Riales otro 2 otro 2.*

*todo dies y ocho Pesos.  
cinco riales."*

#### TRANSLATION.

"Joseph the son of Maria paid in the meson of the holiest virgin of Guadalaxara two days' board for himself 4 reals two fanegas of corn four Dollars and another 4 dollars entrance of nine Beasts two for one three Rials three dinners for my lord two dollars for my lord another three Rials 3 rials for another for my lord five

quarts of pulque for my Lord straw nine rials a medio for  
 pulque another Rial room three days 6 rials room one day  
 9 Rials other 2 other 2      Total eighteen Dollars  
    five rials. 18p. 5r."

AMENDED BILL.

	\$	r.
Servant's board for two days . . . . .	0	4
1½ fanegas of corn . . . . .	1	2
My Lordship's chocolate and dinners for two days	1	0
Pulque . . . . .	0	3
Straw for animals . . . . .	0	4
Hire of room . . . . .	0	4
Servant's ditto . . . . .	0	4
	<hr/>	
	4	5

Showing a difference of fourteen dollars on a bill  
 of four, or eighteen shillings instead of 3l. 12s. 6d.  
 So much for the honesty of "*un hombre de bien*"!

Either from ignorance of their duties or care-  
 lessness, Mexican officials seldom trouble the trav-  
 eller with demanding his passport. It is as well,  
 however, to adhere to the law, and invariably to  
 present it in the larger towns, where it may be  
 presumed the Alcalde can decipher the name and  
*rubrica* of the *ministro de las relaciones interiores*.  
 From the fact of so many English mining com-  
 panies being dispersed throughout the country,  
 whose wealth and respectable way of doing busi-  
 ness are so apparent to the Mexicans, an English-  
 man is pretty sure to receive attention from the

authorities wherever he goes, and a British passport is a sure and certain safeguard from the insolence and rapacity of Jacks-in-office, who have a wholesome dread of the far-reaching power of the "lion and unicorn" which head those vouchsafing documents. A *carta de seguridad* — letter of security — is also indispensable, by which the traveller's transit through the territory of the republic is sanctioned for the space of one year, at the termination of which period it has to be renewed, on presentation to the governor of the state in which he may happen to be. With custom-house regulations there is no inconvenience, a mere form being gone through of opening one package in entering the capitals of the different states, and an opportunely applied dollar will invariably smooth over any difficulty with regard to foreign tobacco, &c., or any of the creature-comforts in the shape of cognac or comestible luxuries, which the traveller will do well to carry with him.

There is one axiom to be never lost sight of in journeying through Mexico. Carry everything with you that you can possibly require on the road, the only limit being the length of your purse, on which will depend your means of conveyance. An European stomach should hardly trust to the country cuisine.

In Northern Mexico and California a custom

exists with both sexes of choosing a particular friend, seldom a relation, to whom the person attaches himself in a bond of strict friendship, confiding to his or her care all his hopes and fears, secrets, &c., and seldom severing the tie, which generally binds them together as long as life lasts. The *compadre* and *commadre* — literally godfather, and godmother — are consulted on every occasion, when advice on the important subject of love is required, and a nice sense of honor restrains them from all betrayal of trust and confidence. They are likewise inseparable companions, and their purses and property are ever at each other's service. Ask a man to lend you his horse; if not mounted on it himself, the chances are that he answers, "*Lo tiene mi compadre* — my godfather has it." It must be confessed, however, that many peccadilloes are fathered on the *compadre* and *commadre*. To vouch for the correctness of some story a New Mexican is telling you, he adds, "*Pues, si no cree su merced, pregunta a mi compadre* — well, since your worship does not believe it, only ask my godfather."

"*Me dixo mi commadre* — my godmother told me so" — says a girl to guarantee a bit of scandal. Thus *compadres* and *commadres* become a species of Mexican Mrs. Harris, who is appealed to on every occasion, and whose imaginary sa-

gacity, profound wisdom, and personal beauty are on every occasion held up to the admiration of the credulous stranger.

I mention this, here, because it very often happens that when, on hiring a servant, credentials or reference as to his character are demanded of him, he immediately requests you to apply to his *compadre*, who of course swears that his friend is everything that is good and honest: "*Muy buen mozo, y hombre de bien.*"



## CHAPTER XIII

### WHEN THE INDIANS COME

SOME of the tales which were narrated to me of the bloody deeds of the Comanches were so affecting and tragical, that they would form admirable themes for the composition of a romance. I may mention one, which was of very recent occurrence, and particularly interested me, as I passed the very spot where the tragical catastrophe occurred. I give the outlines of the tale as it was told to me; and any one in want of materials to work up an exciting melodrama may help themselves to it *con mucha franqueza*.

In a rancho situated in the valley of the Rio Florido, and nearly half-way between the cities of Durango and Chihuahua, lived a family of hardy vaqueros, or cattle-herders, the head of which was a sturdy old sexagenarian, known as El Coxo (the Game Leg). He rejoiced in a "quiver well filled with arrows," since eight fine strapping sons hailed him padre; than any one of whom not a ranchero in the *tierra afuera* could

more dexterously *colear* \* a bull, or at the game of *gallo* tear from its stake the unhappy fowl, and bear it safe from the pursuit of competitors, but piecemeal, to the feet of his admiring lady-love.

Of these eight *mozos*, he who bore away the palm of rancheral superiority, but still in a very slight degree, was the third son, and the handsomest (no little praise, where each and all laid claim to the title of *buen mozo y guapo* — good and strong servant), by name Escamilla, a proper lad of twenty, five feet ten out of his *zapatos* [shoes], straight as an organo, and lithesome as a reed. He was, moreover, more polished than the others, having been schooled at Queretaro, a city, in the estimation of the people of the *tierra afuera*, second only to *Mejico* itself.

With his city breeding, he had of course imbibed a taste for dress, and quite dazzled the eyes of the neighboring rancheras when, on his return to his paternal home, he made his first appearance at a grand *funcion de toros* in all the elaborate finery of a Queretaro dandy. In his first passage of arms he greatly distinguished himself, having thrown three bulls by the tail with consummate adroitness, and won enthusiastic “*vivas*” from the

\* To take a bull by the tail and, while running, overturn him. (Ed.)

muchachas, who graced with their presence the exciting sport.

Close at the heels of Escamilla, and almost rivaling him in good looks and dexterity, came Juan Maria, his next and elder brother, who, indeed in the eyes of the more practical vaqueros, far surpassed his brother in manliness of appearance, and equalled him in horsemanship, wanting alone that "brilliancy of execution" which the other had acquired in the inner provinces, and in practice against the wilder and more active bulls of the *tierra caliente*.

Now Juan Maria, hitherto the first at *el gallo* and bull-tailing, had always laid the trophies of the sport at the feet of one Ysabel Mora, called, from the hacienda where she resided, Ysabel de la Cadena, a pretty black-eyed girl of sixteen, the toast of the valleys of Nazos and Rio Florido, and celebrated even by the *cantadores* [minstrels] at the last fair of el Valle de San Bartolomo as "*la moza mas guapa de la tierra afuera*" [the fairest wench in the countryside]. It so happened that the last year, Ysabel had made her first appearance at a public *funcion*; and at this *gallo* she was wooed, and in a measure won, by the presentation of the remains of the gallant rooster at the hands of Juan Maria; who, his offering being well re-

ceived, from that moment looked upon the pretty Ysabel as his *corteja*, or sweetheart; and she, nothing loth at having the properest lad of the valley at her feet, permitted his attentions, and apparently returned his love.

To make, however, a long story short, the dandy Escamilla, who, too fine to work, had more time on his hands for courting, dishonorably supplanted his brother in the affections of Ysabel; and as Juan Maria, too frank and noble-hearted to force his suit, at once gave way to his more favored brother, the affair was concluded between the girl and Escamilla, and a day named for the marriage ceremony, which was to take place at the hacienda of the bride, where, in honor of the occasion, a grand *funcion de toros* was to be held, at which all the neighbors (the nearest of whom was forty miles distant) were to be present, including, of course, the stalwart sons of El Coxo, the brothers of the bridegroom.

Two or three days before the one appointed for the marriage, the father with his eight sons made their appearance, their gallant figures, as mounted on stout Californian horses they entered the hacienda, exacting a buzz of admiration from the collected rancheros.

The next day El Coxo, with all his sons excepting Escamilla, attended the master of the hacienda

into the plains, for the purpose of driving in the bulls which were required for the morrow's sport, while the other rancheros remained to complete a large corral which was destined to secure them; El Coxo and his sons being selected for the more arduous work of driving in the bulls, since they were the most expert and best-mounted horsemen of the whole neighborhood.

It was towards the close of the day, and the sun was fast sinking behind the rugged crest of the "Bolson," tinging the serrated ridge of that isolated mountain-chain with a golden flood of light, while the mesquite-covered plain beneath lay cold and grey under the deep shadow of the sierra. The shrill pipe of the quail was heard, as it called together the bevy for the night; hares limped out of the thick cover and sought their feeding-grounds; overhead the melancholy cry of the *gruyas* sounded feebly in the aërial distance of their flight; the lowing of cattle resounded from the banks of the arroyo, where the herdsmen were driving them to water; the peones, or laborers of the farm, were quitting the *milpas*, and already seeking their homes, where, at the doors, the women with naked arms were pounding the tortillas on the stone metate, in preparation for the evening meal; and the universal quiet, and the soft and subdued beams of the sinking sun, which shed

a chastened light over the whole landscape, proclaimed that the day was drawing to a close, and that man and beast were seeking the well-earned rest after their daily toil.

The two lovers were sauntering along, careless of the beauty of the scene and hour, and conscious of nothing save their own enraptured thoughts, and the aërial castles, which probably both were building, of future happiness and love.

As they strolled onward, a little cloud of dust arose from the chapparal in front of them; and in the distance, but seemingly in another direction, they heard the shouts of the returning cowherds, and the thundering tread of the bulls they were driving to the corral. In advance of these was seen one horseman, trotting quickly on towards the hacienda.

Nevertheless the cloud of dust before them rolled rapidly onwards, and presently several horsemen emerged from it, galloping towards them in the road.

"Here come the bullfighters," exclaimed the girl, withdrawing her waist from the encircling arm of Escamilla; "let us return."

"Perhaps they are my brothers," answered he; and continued, "Yes, they are eight: look."

But what saw the poor girl, as, with eyes almost starting from her head, and motionless with sud-

den fear, she directed her gaze at the approaching horsemen, who now, turning a bend in the chaparral, were within a few hundred yards of them!

Escamilla followed the direction of the gaze, and one look congealed the trembling coward. A band of Indians were upon them. Naked to the waist, and painted horribly for war, with brandished spears they rushed on. Heedless of the helpless maid, and leaving her to her fate, the coward turned and fled, shouting as he ran the dreaded signal of "*Los barbaros! los barbaros!*"

A horseman met him — it was Juan Maria, who, having lassoed a little antelope on the plains, had ridden in advance of his brothers to present it to the false but unfortunate Ysabel. The exclamations of the frightened Escamilla, and one glance down the road, showed him the peril of the poor girl. Throwing down the animal he was carefully carrying in his arms, he dashed the spurs furiously into the sides of his horse, and rushed like the wind to the rescue. But already the savages were upon her, with a whoop of bloodthirsty joy. She, covering her face with her hands, shrieked to her old lover to save her: — "*Salva me, Juan Maria, por Dios, salva me!*" At that moment the lance of the foremost Indian pierced her heart, and in another her reeking scalp was brandished exultingly aloft by the murderous savage.

Shortlived, however, was his triumph: the clatter of a galloping horse thundered over the ground, and caused him to turn his head. Almost bounding through the air, and in a cloud of dust, with ready lasso swinging round his head, Juan Maria flew, alas! too late, to the rescue of the unhappy maiden. Straight upon the foremost Indian he charged, regardless of the flight of arrows with which he was received. The savage, terrified at the wild and fierce look of his antagonist, turned to fly; but the open coil of the lasso whirled from the expert hand of the Mexican, and the noose fell over the Indian's head, and, as the thrower passed in his horse's stride, dragged him heavily to the ground.

But Juan Maria had fearful odds to contend against, and was unarmed, save by a small *machete*, or rusty sword. But with this he attacked the nearest Indian, and, succeeding in bringing him within reach of his arm, clove his head by a sturdy stroke, and the savage dropped dead from his horse. The others, keeping at a distance, assailed him with arrows, and already he was pierced with many bleeding wounds. Still the gallant fellow fought bravely against the odds, and was encouraged by the shouts of his father and brothers, who were galloping, with loud cries, to the rescue. At that moment an arrow, discharged at but a few



paces' distance, buried itself to the feathers in his breast, and the brothers reached the spot but in time to see Juan Maria fall from his horse, and his bloody scalp borne away in triumph by a naked savage.

The Indians at that moment were reinforced by a body of some thirty or forty others, and a fierce combat ensued between them and Coxo and his sons, who fought with desperate courage to avenge the murder of Juan Maria and the poor Ysabel. Half a dozen of the Comanches bit the dust, and two of the Mexicans lay bleeding on the ground; but the rancheros, coming up from the hacienda in force, compelled the Indians to retreat, and, as night was coming on, they were not pursued. On the ground lay the still quivering body of the girl, and the two Indians near her who were killed by Juan Maria. One of them had his neck broken and his brains dashed out by being dragged over the sharp stones by the horse of the latter, the lasso being fast to the high pommel of the saddle. This Indian still held the long raven scalp-lock of the girl in his hand. Juan Maria was quite dead, and pierced with upwards of twenty bleeding wounds; two of his brothers were lying dangerously wounded; and six Indians, besides the two killed by Juan Maria, fell by the avenging arms of El Coxo and his sons. The bodies of Ysabel and

Juan Maria were borne by the rancheros to the hacienda, and both were buried the next day side by side, at the very hour when the marriage was to have been performed. Escamilla, ashamed of his base cowardice, disappeared, and was not seen for some days, when he returned to his father's rancho, packed up his things, and returned to Queretaro, where he married shortly after.

Just twelve months after the above tragical event occurred, I passed the spot. About three hundred yards from the gate of the hacienda were erected, side by side, two wooden crosses, roughly hewn out of a log of pine. On one, a rudely-cut inscription, in Mexico-Castilian, invites the passer-by to bestow

*"Un Ave Maria y un Pater Noster  
Por el alma de Ysabel Mora,  
Qui à los manos de los barbaros cayo muerta,  
El dia 11 de Octubre, el año 1845,  
En la flor de su juventud y hermosura."*

"One Ave Maria and a Pater Noster for the repose of the soul of Ysabel Mora, who fell by the hands of the barbarians on the 11th of October of the year 1845, and in the flower of her youth and beauty."

On the other —

*"Aquí yace Juan Maria Orteza,  
Vecino de —,  
Matado por los barbaros, el dia 11 de Octubre,  
del año 1845.  
Ora por el, Cristiano, por Dios."*

"Here lies Juan Maria Orteza, native of —, killed by the barbarians on the 11th of October, 1845.

"Christian, for the sake of God, pray for his soul."

The goodly piles of stones, to which I added my offering, at the feet of both crosses, testify that the invocation has not been neglected, and that many an Ave Maria and Pater Noster has been breathed, to release from purgatory the souls of Ysabel and Juan Maria.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE UNCHANGING MEXICAN

**T**HE city of Durango \* may be considered as the Ultima Thule of the civilised portion of Mexico. Beyond it, to the north and north-west, stretch away the vast uncultivated and unpeopled plains of Chihuahua, the Bolson de Mapimi, and the arid deserts of the Gila. In the oases of these, wild and hostile tribes of Indians have their dwelling-places, from which they continually descend upon the border settlements and haciendas, sweeping off the herds of horses and mules, and barbarously killing the unarmed peasantry. This warfare — if warfare it can be called, where the aggression and bloodshed are on one side only, and passive endurance on the other — has existed from immemorial time; and the wonder is that the country has not long since been abandoned by the persecuted inhabitants, who at all seasons are subject to their attacks.

\* The city was founded in 1559, by Velasco el Primero, Viceroy of New Spain, previous to which it was a presidio, or fortified post, to protect the frontier from the incursions of the Indians (Chichimees).

The Apaches, whose country borders upon the department of Durango, are untiring and incessant in their hostility against the whites; and, being near neighbors, are enabled to act with great rapidity against the haciendas and ranchos on the frontier. They are a treacherous and cowardly race of Indians, and seldom attack even the Mexican save by treachery and ambuscade. When they have carried off a number of horses and mules sufficient for their present wants, they send a deputation to the governors of Durango and Chihuahua to express their anxiety for peace. This is invariably granted them, and then *en pax* they resort to the frontier villages, and even the capital of the department, for the purpose of trade and amusement. The animals they have stolen in Durango and Chihuahua they find a ready market for in New Mexico and Sonora; and this traffic is most unblushingly carried on, and countenanced by the authorities of the respective states.

But the most formidable enemy, and most feared and dreaded by the inhabitants of Durango and Chihuahua, are the warlike Comanches, who, from their distant prairie country beyond the Del Norte and Rio Pecos, at certain seasons of the year, and annually, undertake regularly organised expeditions into these states, and frequently far into the

interior (as last year to the vicinity of Sombrete), for the purpose of procuring animals and slaves, carrying off the young boys and girls, and massacring the adults in the most wholesale and barbarous manner.

So regular are these expeditions, that in the Comanche calendar the month of September is known as the *Mexico moon*, as the other months are designated the buffalo moon, the young bear moon, the corn moon, &c. They generally invade the country in three different divisions, of from two to five hundred warriors in each. One, the most southern, passes the Rio Grande between the old presidios of San Juan and the mouth of the Pecos, and harries the fertile plains and wealthy haciendas of El Valle de San Bartolomo, the Rio Florido, San José del Parral, and the Rio Nasas. Every year their incursions extend farther into the interior, as the frontier haciendas become depopulated by their ravages, and the villages deserted and laid waste. For days together, in the Bolson de Mapimi, I traversed a country completely deserted on this account, passing through ruined villages untrodden for years by the foot of man.

The central division enters between the Presidio del Norte and Monclova, where they join the party coming in from the north, and, passing the moun-

tains of Mapimi and traversing a desert country destitute of water, where they suffer the greatest privations, ravage the valleys of Mapimi, Guajocilla, and Chihuahua, and even the haciendas at the foot of the Sierra Madre. It appears incredible that no steps are taken to protect the country from this invasion, which does not take the inhabitants on a sudden or unawares, but at certain and regular seasons and from known points. Troops are certainly employed *nominally* to check the Indians, but very rarely attack them, although the Comanches give every opportunity; and, thoroughly despising them, meet them on the open field, and with equal numbers almost invariably defeat the regular troops. The people themselves are unable to offer any resistance, however well inclined they may be to do so, as it has always been the policy of the government to keep them unarmed; and, being unacquainted with the use of weapons, when placed in their hands, they have no confidence, and offer but a feeble resistance. So perfectly aware of this fact are the Comanches, that they never hesitate to attack superior numbers. When in small parties the Mexicans never resist, even if armed, but fall upon their knees and cry for mercy. Sometimes, however, goaded by the murder of their families and friends, the rancheros collect together, and, armed with bows

and arrows and slings and stones, go out to meet the Indians (as occurred when I was passing), and are slaughtered like sheep.

In the fall of last year, 1845, and at the present moment, 1846, the Indians have been more audacious than ever was known in previous years. It may be, that in the present instance they are rendered more daring by the knowledge of the war between the United States and Mexico, and the supposition that the troops would consequently be withdrawn from the scene of their operations. They are now (September) overrunning the whole department of Durango and Chihuahua, have cut off all communication, and defeated in two pitched battles the regular troops sent against them. Upwards of ten thousand head of horses and mules have already been carried off, and scarcely has a hacienda or rancho on the frontier been unvisited, and everywhere the people have been killed or captured. The roads are impassable, all traffic is stopped, the ranchos barricaded, and the inhabitants afraid to venture out of their doors. The posts and expresses travel at night, avoiding the roads, and intelligence is brought in daily of massacres and harryings.

My servants refused to proceed farther; nor would money induce a Durangueno to risk his scalp. Every one predicted certain destruction if



I ventured to cross the plains to Chihuahua, as the road lay in the very midst of the scenes of the Indian ravages. My hostess, with tears in her eyes, implored me not to attempt the journey; but my mind was made up to proceed, and alone, if I could not induce a mozo to accompany me. I had resolved to reach New Mexico by a certain time, and in travelling through a dangerous country laid it down as a principle not to be deterred by risks, but to "go ahead," and trust to fortune and a sharp look-out.

I had made preparations for my departure, and had given up any hope of procuring a mozo, when, at the eleventh hour, one presented himself, in the person of one of the most rascally-looking natives that ever stuck knife into his master. Asking him what induced him to run the risk of accompanying me, he answered that, being "*muy pobre*" [very poor] and unable to procure a living (the road was shut to him), and hearing that "*su merced*"—my worship—had offered high wages, he had determined to volunteer; being, moreover, as he assured me, "*muy valiente y aficionado a manejar las armas*"—very valiant and accustomed to the use of arms." The end of it was that I engaged him, although the man bore a notoriously bad character, and was more than suspected of being a *ladron* of the worst description. But it was Hobson's

choice at the time, and I did not hesitate to take him, trusting to myself to take care that he did not play me false. I was, however, a little shaken when the same evening a man accosted me as I was walking in the streets with an English gentleman, a resident in Durango, and informed me that my new mozo was at that moment in a pulque-shop, where, after imbibing more than was good for him, he had confided to a friend, and in the hearing of the man who now gave the information, his intention to ease me of my goods and chattels and animals, premising that, as he had heard from my late servants that I intrusted my mozo with arms and generally rode in advance, it would be an easy matter some fine morning to administer *un pistol-etazo en la espalda* — a pistol-ball in my back — and make off with the property to Chihuahua or Sonora, where he would have no difficulty in disposing of the plunder. However, I paid no attention to this story, thinking that, if true, it was merely a drunken boast.

As Durango may be called the limit of Mexico proper and its *soi-disant* civilization, it may not be out of place to take a hasty glance at the general features of the country, the social and moral condition of the people, and the impressions conveyed to my mind in my journey through it.

There are many causes, physical and moral,

which prevent Mexico from progressing in prosperity and civilization. Although possessing a vast territory, which embraces all the varieties of climate of the temperate and torrid zones, with a rich and prolific soil capable of yielding every natural production of the known world, yet these natural advantages are counter-balanced by obstacles, which prevent their being as profitable to the inhabitants as might naturally be expected, and in a great measure render them negative and of no avail.

A glance at the physical geography of Mexico will show that the extensive and fertile table-lands of the central region are isolated, and, as it were, cut off from communication with the coast, by their position on the ridge of the Cordilleras, and the insurmountable obstacles to a practicable traffic presented by the escarpments of the *terraces*, the steps, as it were, from the elevated table-lands to the maritime districts, and the tropical regions of the interior. The country is also destitute of navigable rivers, and possesses but two of even moderate size — the Rio Grande del Norte, which runs into the Gulf of Mexico, and the Rio Grande, or Colorado of the West, which falls into the Pacific Ocean. Its eastern coast is swept at certain seasons by fearful tempests, and presents not one sheltering harbor or secure roadstead. The trop-

ical region, subject to fatal malaria, is almost excluded to the settlement of the white population, and consequently its natural riches are almost entirely neglected and unappropriated. Moreover, when we look at the component parts of the population of this vast country, we are at no loss to account for the existing evils — the total absence of government, and the universal demoralization and want of energy, moral and physical, which is everywhere apparent.

The entire population is about eight millions, of which three-fifths are Indians, or of Indian origin, and Indios Bravos, or barbarous tribes; the remainder of Spanish descent. This population is scattered over an area of 1,312,850 square miles, in departments widely separated, and having various and distinct interests, the intercommunication insecure, and a large proportion in remote regions, beyond the care or thought of an impotent government.

The vast table-land which stretches along the ridge of the Cordillera of Anahuac, although possessing tracts of great fertility, is not, in itself, the rich and productive region it is generally represented to be. The want of fuel and water must always prevent its being otherwise than thinly inhabited, and these great drawbacks to the population and cultivation of these districts would ap-

pear to be insurmountable. I believe the capabilities of the whole country to be much overrated, although its mineral wealth alone must always render it of great importance; but it is a question whether the possession of mineral wealth conduces to the wellbeing of a country. The working of mines of the precious metal in Mexico, however, has certainly caused many spots to be cultivated and inhabited, which would otherwise have been left sterile and unproductive, and has been the means of giving employment to the Indians, and in some degree has partially civilized them, where otherwise they would have remained in their original state of barbarism and ignorance.

The Mexicans, as a people, rank decidedly low in the scale of humanity. They are deficient in moral as well as physical organization: by the latter I do not mean to assert that they are wanting in corporeal qualities, although certainly inferior to most races in bodily strength; but there is a deficiency in that respect which is invariably found attendant upon a low state of moral or intellectual organization. They are treacherous, cunning, indolent, and without energy, and cowardly by nature. Inherent, instinctive cowardice is rarely met with in any race of men, yet I affirm that in this instance it certainly exists, and is most conspicuous; they possess at the same time that amount of

brutish indifference to death which can be turned to good account in soldiers, and I believe, if properly led, that the Mexicans would on this account behave tolerably well in the field, but not more than tolerably.

It is a matter of little astonishment to me that the country is in the state it is. It can never progress or become civilized until its present population is supplanted by a more energetic one. The present would-be republican form of government is not adapted to such a population as exists in Mexico, as is plainly evident in the effects of the constantly recurring revolutions. Until a people can appreciate the great principles of civil and religious liberty, the advantages of free institutions are thrown away upon them. A long minority has to be passed through before this can be effected; and in this instance, before the requisite fitness can be attained, the country will probably have passed from the hands of its present owners to a more able and energetic race.

On the subject of government I will not touch: I maintain that the Mexicans are incapable of *self-government*, and will always be so until regenerated. The separation from Spain has been the ruin of the country, which, by the by, is quite ready to revert to its former owners; and the prevailing feeling over the whole country inclines to

the re-establishment of a monarchical system. The miserable anarchy which has existed since its separation, has sufficiently and bitterly proved to the people the inadequacy of the present one; and the wonder is, that, with the large aristocratic party which so greatly preponderates in Mexico (the army and the church), this much-to-be-desired event has not been brought about.

The cause of the *two hundred and thirty-seven* revolutions which, since the declaration of its independence, have that number of times turned the country upside down, has been individual ambition and lust of power. The intellectual power is in the hands of a few, and by this minority all the revolutions are effected. The army once gained over (which, by the aid of bribes and the priesthood, is an easy matter), the wished-for consummation is at once brought about. It thus happens that, instead of a free republican form of government, the country is ruled by a most perfect military despotism.

The population is divided into but two classes — the high and the low: there is no intermediate rank to connect the two extremes, and consequently the hiatus between them is deep and strongly marked. The relation subsisting between the peasantry and the wealthy hacendados, or landowners, is a species of serfdom, little better

than slavery itself. Money, in advance of wages, is generally lent to the peon or laborer, who is by law bound to serve the lender, if required, until such time as the debt is repaid; and as care is taken that this shall never happen, the debtor remains a bondsman to the day of his death.

Law or justice hardly exists in name even, and the ignorant peasantry, under the priestly thralldom which holds them in physical as well as moral bondage, have neither the energy nor courage to stand up for the amelioration of their condition, or the enjoyment of that liberty, which it is the theoretical boast of republican governments their system so largely deals in, but which, in reality, is a practical falsehood and delusion.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE EDGE OF CIVILIZATION

**O**N the 10th I left Durango for Chihuahua and New Mexico, taking with me the mozo I have before mentioned as bearing anything but a good character. The first day's march led through a wild uncultivated country, with large plains of excellent pasture, but not a symptom of cultivation. We stopped at night at the hacienda of El Chorro, a little hamlet of adobe huts surrounding the *casa grande* of the plantation. As we arrived, the rancheros were driving in an immense cavalcade or herd of horses from the pastures, to be secured during the night in the corrals and near the hacienda, *por las novedades que hay* — on account of the novelties (*i. e.* Indians) which are abroad — as the proprietor informed me. The vicinity of the hacienda abounds in salitrose springs and deposits of muriate of soda, to which the horses and mules were constantly breaking away, and drinking the water, and licking the earth with the greatest avidity. Distance from Durango twenty-eight miles.

11th.—To the rancho of Los Sauces — the

willows. The plains to-day were covered with cattle, and horses and mules. In the morning I was riding slowly ahead of my *cavallada*, passing at the time through a lonely mesquite-grove, when the sudden report of a fire-arm, and the whistling of a bullet past my head at rather unpleasantly close quarters, caused me to turn sharply round, when I saw my amiable mozo with a pistol in his hand, some fifteen yards behind me, looking very guilty and foolish. To whip a pistol out of my holsters and ride up to him was the work of an instant; and I was on the point of blowing out his brains, when his terrified and absurdly guilty-looking face turned my ire into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"*Amigo*," I said to him, "do you call this being skilled in the use of arms, to miss my head at fifteen yards?"

"*Ah caballero!* in the name of all the saints I did not fire at you, but at a duck which was flying over the road. *No lo cree su merced* — your worship cannot believe I would do such a thing." Now it so happened, that the pistols, which I had given him to carry, were secured in a pair of holsters tightly buckled and strapped round his waist. It was a difficult matter to unbuckle them at any time; and as to his having had time to get one out to fire at a duck flying over the road, it

was impossible, even if such an idea had occurred to him. I was certain that the duck was a fable, invented when he had missed me, and, in order to save my ammunition, and my head from another sportsmanlike display, I halted and took from him everything in the shape of offensive weapon, not excepting his knife; and wound up a sermon, which I deemed it necessary to give him, by administering a couple of dozen, well laid on with the buckle-end of my surcingle, at the same time giving him to understand, that if, hereafter, I had reason to suspect that he had even dreamed of another attempt upon my life, I would pistol him without a moment's hesitation.— Distance from El Chorro thirty-six miles.

12th.— To the rancho of Yerbaniz, through the same uncultivated plains, surrounded by sierras, and passing by a ridge from one into another, each being as like the other as twins. For a thousand miles the aspect of these plains never varied, and the sketch of the plain of Los Sauces would answer for the plain of El Paso, and every intermediate one between Durango and New Mexico. At daybreak this morning I descried three figures, evidently armed and mounted men, descending a ridge and advancing towards me. As in this country to meet a living soul on the road is perhaps to meet an enemy thirsting for your property or

your life, I stopped my animals, and, uncovering my rifle, rode on to reconnoitre. The strangers also halted on seeing me, and, again moving on when they saw me alone, we advanced, cautiously and prepared, towards each other. As they drew near I at once saw by the heavy rifle which each carried across his saddle-bow that they were from New Mexico, and that one was a white man. He proved to be a German named Spiers, who was on his way to the fair of San Juan with a caravan of nearly forty wagons loaded with merchandise from the United States. He had left the frontier of Missouri in May, crossing the grand prairies to Santa Fé, and, learning that his American teamsters would not be permitted to enter Durango, he had ridden on in advance to obtain permission for their admittance. His wagons had been nearly six months on the road, travelling the whole time, and were now a few miles behind them. He gave a dismal account of the state of the country through which I was about to pass. The Comanches were everywhere, and two days before had killed two of his men; and not a soul ventured out of his house in that part of the country. He likewise said it was impossible that I could reach Chihuahua alone, and urged me strongly to return. The runaway Governor of New Mexico, General Armijo, was travelling in company with

his caravan, on his way to Mexico, to give an account of his shameful cowardice in surrendering Santa Fé to the Americans without a show of resistance.

A little farther on I saw the long line of wagons, like ships at sea, crossing a plain before me. They were all drawn by teams of eight fine mules, and under the charge and escort of some thirty strapping young Missourians, each with a long heavy rifle across his saddle. I stopped and had a long chat with Armijo, who, a mountain of fat, rolled out of his American Dearborn, and inquired the price of cotton goods in Durango, he having some seven wagon-loads with him, and also what they said, in Mexico, of the doings in Santa Fé, alluding to its capture by the Americans without any resistance. I told him that there was but one opinion respecting it expressed all over the country — that General Armijo and the New Mexicans were a pack of arrant cowards; to which he answered, "Adios! They don't know that I had but 75 men to fight 3000. What could I do?" \*

\* The facts are that an American expedition, called the "Army of the West," under Col. Stephen W. Kearney, was sent, in April, 1846, to invade New Mexico, Chihuahua, and California. The entire command numbered 1,558, with 16 pieces of artillery. On its approach to Santa Fé, the Mexican commander, Gen. Manuel Armijo, incontinently fled. (Ed.)

Twenty-one of the teamsters belonging to this caravan had left it a few days previously, with the intention of returning to the United States by the way of Texas. What became of them will be presently narrated.

After leaving the caravan I saw a herd of *berendos* (antelope) in the plain, but was unable to get within shot, the ground being destitute of cover, and the animals very wild. We were now in the country of large game, deer and antelope being abundant in the plains, and bears occasionally met with in the sierras.

This night I encamped near a rancho, being refused admittance into the building, and picketed my animals around the camp. I had also a disagreement with an *arriero*, whom I had hired at Los Sauces, with his mule, to carry one of my packs, one of the mules being lame. He had agreed, for a certain sum, to travel with me two *jornadas* or days' journeys. In Mexican traveling there are two distinct *jornadas* — one of *atajo*, or the usual distance performed by *arrieros*; the other *de caballo*, or journey performed on horseback, or with light packs. To prevent all misunderstanding, I had explicitly agreed with him for two of my own *jornadas*, or days' travel, of twelve leagues, or thirty-five miles, each day; but when he heard that the Indians were so near at

hand, he wanted to give up his contract, and claimed the full pay of two *jornadas* for the distance he had already come, which was thirty-six miles, affirming that it was two regular days' journeys of *atajo*. This I refused to pay him, offering the half of the stipulated sum, as he had performed but one day's journey. Blustering and threatening, off he went to the *alcalde*, for in all ranchos the head man is chief magistrate, who sent me a peremptory order to pay the demand in full; to which I sent back an answer more energetic than polite, together with the sum I had originally offered, saying at the same time that if it was not accepted I would not pay a farthing. Presently I saw the *alcalde*, attended by a posse, sally from the gate of the rancho and approach my camp, where I was very busily engaged in cleaning my arms. No sooner was the worthy near enough to observe my employment, than he wheeled off suddenly and returned to the rancho, and I saw no more of him or the *arriero*.

The ranchos and haciendas in Durango and Chihuahua are all enclosed by a high wall, flanked at the corners by circular bastions loopholed for musketry. The entrance is by a large gate, which is closed at night; and on the *azotea*, or flat roof of the building, a sentry is constantly posted day and night. Round the corral are the dwellings

of the peones; the casa grande, or proprietor's house, being generally at one end, and occupying one or more sides of the square. In this instance I was refused admittance into the enclosure — for what reason I do not know — and obliged to encamp about two hundred yards from it, having to pay for two or three logs of wood, with which I made a fire. The rancheria, however, bears a very bad character, as I afterwards learned; and this night I had as much to dread from them and my rascally mozo as from the sudden attack of the Indians. My blanket was a little arsenal, as I had not only my own, but my servant's arms, to take care of. That worthy begged hard for a pistol or gun, saying that, if the Indians came, he would be killed like a dog. I told him to go into the rancho amongst his countrymen, which I believe he did, for I saw or heard nothing more of him during the night.

13th.—To La Noria Perdizenia, forty miles; the country getting more wild and desolate, and entirely destitute of water. Not a sign of habitation, or a human being on the road. We passed a gap between two sierras, called El Passage — the passage — which is wild and picturesque, the plains covered with mesquite, and a species of palm, called *palma*. We were approaching the village of La Perdizenia a little before sunset,



through a broken country, with hills and bluffs rising on each side of the road, when suddenly, as I was riding in advance, I saw on one of these, which was some 500 or 600 yards from the road, a party of Indians, on horseback and on foot. I instantly stopped, and without saying a word, or pointing out the cause to the mozo, dismounted, and, catching the wildest mule, immediately tied her legs together with a riata, and covered the eyes of all with their *tapojos* or blinders. I then pointed with my finger to the hill, saying, "*Mire, los Indios* — [see, the Indians]."

"*Ave Maria Purissima! estamos perdidos* — we are lost!" — exclaimed the Mexican, and made towards his horse, from which he had also dismounted; but this I prevented, telling him that he had to fight, and not run. Half dead with fright, he threw himself on his knees, beseeching all the saints in the calendar to save him, and vowing offerings of all kinds if his life were spared. By this time the Indians, perceiving that there were but two of us, commenced descending the hill, leaving one or two of the party on the top as videttes. Seeing a fight seemed inevitable, I stuck my cleaning-rod into the ground as a rest for my rifle; and, placing my carbine and pistols at my side, sat down to my work, intending to open upon them with my rifle as soon as they came within

reach. However, this they did not seem inclined to do, but, striking their shields, and brandishing their bows, shouted to me to give up my animals and pass on. I kept my position for some time, but, finding they were not inclined to attack me, and not wishing to remain there when night was coming on, I unloosed the mules, and sent them forward with the mozo, remaining in rear myself to cover their retreat. Once in his saddle, invoking "*todos los santos*," off he galloped toward the village, driving the mules pell-mell before him; nor did he stop until he was in the midst of the plaza, narrating to shrieking women, and all the population of the village, his miraculous escape.

The reason of the Indians not charging upon us was that they saw a party of Mexicans on their way to the village, from a mine in the sierra, who were concealed from our view, and thought, no doubt, that we might be able to defend ourselves until the noise of the firing would bring them to our assistance.

When I arrived at La Noria I rode into the square, and found the inhabitants in the greatest alarm and dismay. They had been expecting the Indians for some days, as they had already committed several atrocities in the neighboring ranchos. The women were weeping and flying about in every direction, hiding their children and

valuables, barricading the houses, and putting what few arms they could collect in the hands of the reluctant men. As I rode through the village seeking a corral for my animals, a woman ran out of a house and begged me to enter, offering her stable, and corn, and straw for the beasts, and the best her house afforded for myself. I gladly accepted her hospitality, and followed her into a neat clean little house, with a corral full of fig-trees and grape-vines, and a large yard with a pond of water in the centre, and a stack of *hoja* at one end, promising well for the comfort of the tired animals.

"Ah!" she exclaimed on my entering; "*gracios à Dios*, I have some one to protect the lone widow and her fatherless children. If the savages come now, I don't care, since we have good arms in the house, and those *qui saben manejarlos* — who know how to use them."

After supper I visited the *alcalde*, and advised him to take some measures to oppose the Indians in case they attacked the place, as I had no doubt that the party which I had seen was but the advanced guard of a large body.

"Ah, caballero," he answered, "*que podemos hacer?* — what can we do? We have no arms, and our people have no courage to use them if we had; but, thank God! the *barbaros* are ignorant

of this, and will not attack the town; for how do they know but what we have *escopetas* in every window? These savages are very ignorant."

The next morning I resumed my journey, much to the surprise of the people of La Noria, who looked upon us as lost; and, crossing the Nasas beyond the hacienda of El Conejo (the rabbit), intended to go on some leagues farther, when I met some wagons belonging to a Frenchman of Chihuahua, and, as he was brimful of *novedades*, I returned and camped with them near the hacienda, to hear the news. The Comanches, he said, were in great force beyond the village of El Gallo, and were killing and slaying in every direction. They had, a few days before, attacked a company of bullfighters under a Gachupin named Bernardo, on their way to the fair of El Valle de San Bartolomo, killing seven of them and wounding all the others. They had also had a fight with the troops at the Rio Florido, killing seventeen and wounding many more.

On the 16th I reached El Gallo (the cock), where the Indians three days before had killed two men belonging to Spiers' caravan, within a hundred yards of the village. The road from El Conejo for forty miles passes through a most dismal country, and was crossed several times by the Indian trail. I had now to keep a sharp look-out, as

there was no doubt that they were in the neighborhood, and presently I had ocular proof of their recent presence. We were passing through a chaparral of mesquite, where the road passes near a point of rocks, on which were seated hundreds of sopilotes. About a dozen of these birds flew up from the side of the road, and, turning my horse to the spot, I found they had been collected on the dead body of a Mexican, partly stripped, and the breast displaying several ghastly wounds. The head had been scalped, and a broken arrow still remained buried in the face, or rather what remained of it, for the eyes and part of the brain had been already picked out by the sopilotes, and a great part of the body devoured. Life did not appear to have been extinct many hours; probably he had been killed the night before, as the birds had but that morning discovered the body. We had no means of digging a grave, and therefore were obliged to leave it as we found it; and as soon as I had left the spot the sopilotes recommenced their revolting feast.

I stayed at El Gallo in the house of a farmer who had lost three sons by the Indians within a few years. Two of their widows, young and handsome, were in the house. He himself had been severely wounded by the Indians on several occasions. Their corn was now ready for cutting,

but they were afraid to venture outside the village, and procured enough for their daily consumption by collecting together all the villagers and proceeding to the fields in a body to bring in a supply. I remained here for two days, as one of my mules was seriously lame, during which time my chief occupation was sitting with the family, shelling corn, and *platicando* (chatting). In the evening a guitar was brought, and a fandango got up for my especial amusement. Some of the dances of the country people are not without grace, and with tolerable pantomimic action; but the greatest charms are the extempore songs which accompany the music, and, being chanted to a low broken measure, are at the same time novel and pleasing to the ear.

In a rancho the time is occupied in the following way. At daybreak the females of the family rise and prepare the chocolate or atole, which is eaten the first thing in the morning. Breakfast is usually taken about nine o'clock, consisting of meat prepared with chile colorado, frijoles, and tortillas: dinner and supper, at midday and sunset, are likewise substantial meals. The gourd or pumpkin (*calabaza*) is much used in this part of Mexico, and is an excellent and wholesome vegetable. Between the meals the men employ themselves in the milpas, or attending to the animals;

the women busy themselves about the house, making clothes, &c. &c., as with us; but severe labor is unknown to either men or women.

While here I assisted in the erection of two wooden crosses on the spot where Spiers' men were killed by the Comanches three days before. They had remained behind the caravan to bring some bread that was baking for the party, when just outside the town they were set upon by the Indians and killed.

In Durango and the neighboring state of Chihuahua, the rancherias are supplied with such simple goods as they require by small traders, resident in the capitals of these states, who trade from one village to another with two or three wagons, which, when their goods are sold, they freight with supplies for the cities or the mines. These traders are all foreigners — French, Germans, English, and Americans; and their adventures and hairbreadth escapes, while passing through the country overrun by Indians, are often most singular and exciting. Their arrivals in the villages are always welcome, as then the muchachas make their purchases of rebosos and gay enaguas, and the "*majos*" [boasters] their sarapes and sashes.

The night before my departure from El Gallo, I was sitting in the corral *platicando*, while all the

family were busy as usual corn-shelling, when a loud voice was heard, a cracking of whips, and cries of "wo-ha, wo-ha-a, wo-o-h-ha!"

"*Estrangeros!*" exclaimed one of the girls.

"*Los Tejanos!*" exclaimed another.

"*Los carros*" (the wagons), said Don José, and I threw my sarape over my shoulder, and, proceeding to the open space in the centre of the village, dignified by the name of plaza, found four wagons just arrived, and the teamsters unhitching the mules. They proved to be the caravan of one Davy Workman, an Englishman by birth, but long resident in, and a citizen of, the United States; a tall, hard-featured man, and most determined in look, as he was known to be in character — *un hombre muy bien conocido*, as my *patron* informed me. By this arrival more *novedades* were brought, and *los Indios! los Indios!* were on everybody's tongue.

Señor Angel, my mozo, here openly rebelled, and refused to proceed farther; but a promise of a few extra dollars at length induced him to agree to accompany me as far as Mapimi, sixty-five miles from El Gallo, and situated on what is called the frontier.



## CHAPTER XVI

### A THIRSTY LAND

FROM El Gallo to Mapimi a mule-track leads the traveller through a most wild and broken country, perfectly deserted; rugged sierras rising from the mesquite-covered plains, which are sterile and entirely destitute of water. A little out of the direct route is the Hacienda de la Cadena, a solitary plantation standing in a dismal plain, the scene of constantly recurring Indian attacks; for an arroyo or water-course which runs through it, and in which that necessary element is found at intervals in deep holes, is resorted to by the Indians, when on their way to the haciendas of the interior.

I had resolved to pass through this part of the country, although far out of the beaten track, in order to visit El Real de Mapimi, a little town, near a sierra which is said to be very rich in ore; and also for the purpose of travelling through a tract of country laid waste by the Comanches, and but little known, and which is designated, *par excellence*, "*los desiertos de la frontera* —the deserts

of the frontier;" not so much from its sterility, as on account of its having been abandoned by its inhabitants, from the fear of the perpetual Indian attacks, as it lay in their direct route to the interior.

As sixty-five miles was rather a long journey for one day, I resolved to start late, and proceed some twenty or thirty miles and then encamp, although it would be necessary to remain that night without water. Leaving El Gallo about midday, I stopped at some cattle-wells a short distance from the village to water the animals the last thing, and fill my own *huages* (a canteen made out of a gourd), The mules and horses, however, which unfortunately did not anticipate a scarcity at the end of their day's journey, refused to drink, and we continued our journey under a hot and burning sun.

The ranchero's family here took leave of me with tears, and prayers to all the saints for my safe journey. The old grandmother, after blessing me, told me that she had, by dint of I don't know how many Ave Marias, interested the patron saint of the family in my behalf, one San Ysidro of Guadalajara, who, she was assured, would take me under his especial keeping. She likewise hung round my neck a copper coin with a miraculous hole in it, which would preserve me from the arrows of the Comanches, and the still more dan-

gerous weapons of "*el enemigo del mundo* [the enemy of the world]," who, she said, was ever "*cazando*" (hunting) after the souls of heretics.

The plains were still covered with mesquite, and a species of palm which grows to the height of five or six feet, a bunch of long narrow leaves issuing from the top of the stem, which is frequently as thick as a man's body. From a distance it is exactly like an Indian with a head-dress of feathers, and Angel was continually calling my attention to these vegetable savages. Between the plains an elevated ridge presents itself, generally a spur from the sierras which run parallel to them on the eastern and western flanks, and this formation is everywhere the same. Where the ground is covered with mesquite-thickets or chaparrals, a high but coarse grass is found; but on the bluffs is an excellent species, known in Mexico as *gramma*, and on the prairies as a variety of the buffalo-grass, on which cattle and horses thrive and fatten equally as well as on grain.

As I was riding close to a bunch of mesquite the whiz of a rattlesnake's tail caused my horse to spring on one side and tremble with affright. I dismounted, and, drawing the wiping-stick from my rifle, approached the reptile to kill it. The snake, as thick as my wrist, and about three feet long, was curled up, with its flat vicious-looking

head and neck erected, and its tail rattling violently. A blow on the head soon destroyed it, but, as I was remounting, my rifle slipped out of my hand, and crack went the stock. A thong of buckskin however soon made it as secure as ever.

After travelling about twenty-five miles I selected a camping-ground, and, unloading the mules, made a kind of breastwork of the packs and saddles, behind which to retreat in case of an Indian attack, which was more than probable, as we had discovered plenty of recent signs in the plains. It was about sunset when we had completed our little fort, and, spreading a *petate*, or mat, the animals were soon at their suppers of corn, which I had brought for the purpose. They had all their *cabrestas* or ropes round their necks, and trailing on the ground, in order that they might be easily caught and tied when they had finished their corn; and, giving the mozo strict orders to this effect, I rolled myself in my blanket and was soon asleep, as I intended to be on the watch myself from midnight, to prevent surprise.

In about two or three hours I awoke, and, jumping up, found Angel asleep, and that all the animals had disappeared. It was pitchy dark, and not a trace of them could be distinguished. After an hour's ineffectual search I returned to camp, and waited until daybreak, when it would be light

enough to track the animals. This there was no difficulty in doing, and I at once found that, after hunting for some time for water, they had taken the track back to El Gallo, whither I had no doubt they had returned for water. It was certainly a great relief to me to find that they had not been taken by the Indians, which at first I thought was the case; but their course was perfectly plain where they had trodden down the high grass, wet with dew, in their search for water. Not finding it, they had returned at once, and in a direct course, to our yesterday's trail, and made off towards El Gallo, without stopping to eat, or even pick the tempting gramma on their way. The only fear now was, that a wandering party of Indians should fall in with them on the road, when they would not only seize the animals, but discover our present retreat by following their trail.

When I returned to camp I immediately despatched Angel to El Gallo, ordering him to come back instantly, without delaying a moment, when he had found the beasts, remaining myself to take charge of the camp and baggage. On examining a pair of saddle-bags which my kind hostess at El Gallo had filled with tortillas, quesos, etc., I found that Mr. Angel had, either during the night, or when I was hunting for the missing animals, discussed all its contents, not leaving as much as

a crumb; and as the fresh morning air had given me a sharp appetite, I took my rifle and slung a double-barrel carbine on my back, placed a pair of pistols in my belt, and, thus armed, started off to the sierra to kill an antelope and broil a collop for breakfast.

Whilst hunting I crossed the sierra, which was rocky and very precipitous, and from the top looked down into a neighboring plain, where I fancied I could discern an arroyo with running water. Half suffocated at the time with thirst, I immediately descended, although the place was six or seven miles out in the plain, and thought of nothing but assuaging my thirst. I had nearly completed the descent when a band of antelope passed me, and stopped to feed in a little plateau near which ran a cañon or hollow, which would enable me to approach them within shot. Down the cañon I accordingly crept, carefully concealing myself in the long grass and bushes, and occasionally raising my head to judge the distance. In this manner I had approached, as I thought, to within rifle-shot, and, creeping between two rocks at the edge of the hollow, I raised my head to reconnoitre, and met a sight which caused me to drop it again behind the cover, like a turtle drawing into its shell.

About two hundred yards from the cañon, and

hardly twice ~~that~~ distance from the spot where I lay concealed, were riding quietly along, in Indian file, eleven Comanches, painted and armed for war. Each had a lance and bow and arrows, and the chief, who was in advance, had a rifle, in a gaily ornamented case of buckskin, hanging at his side. They were naked to the waist, their buffalo robes being thrown off their shoulders and lying on their hips, and across the saddle, which was a mere pad of buffalo-skin. They were making towards the cañon, which I imagined they would cross by a deer-path near where I stood.

I certainly thought my time was come, but was undecided whether to fire upon them as soon as they were near enough, or trust to the chance of their passing me undiscovered. Although the odds were great, I certainly had the advantage, being in an excellent position, and having six shots in readiness, even if they charged, when they could only attack me one at a time. I took in at once the advantages of my position, and determined, if they showed an intention of crossing the cañon by the deer-path, to attack them, but not otherwise.

As they approached, laughing and talking, I raised my rifle, and, resting it in the fork of a bush which completely hid me, I covered the chief, his brawny breast actually shining (oily as it was) at the end of my sight. His life, and probably

mine, hung on a thread. Once he turned his horse, when he arrived at the deer-track which crossed the cañon, and, thinking that they were about to approach by that path, my finger even pressed the trigger; but an Indian behind him said a few words, and pointed along the plain, when he resumed his former course and passed on. I certainly breathed more freely, although (such is human nature) no sooner had they turned off than I regretted not having fired. If not unnecessary, it would not have been a rash act, for in my position, and armed as I was, I was more than a match for the whole party.

However, antelope and water went unscathed, and as soon as the Indians were out of sight I again crossed the sierra, and reached the camp about two hours before sunset, where, to my disappointment, the animals had not yet arrived, and no signs of their approach were visible on the plain. I determined, if they did not make their appearance by sundown, to return at once to El Gallo, as I suspected my mozo might commit some foul play, and perhaps abscond with the horses and mules.

Sun went down, but no Angel; and darkness set in and found me, almost dead with thirst, on my way to El Gallo. It was with no little difficulty I could make my way, now stumbling over rocks,



and now impaling myself on the sharp prickles of the palma or nopalo. Several times I was in the act of attacking one of the former, so ridiculously like feathered Indians did they appear in the dim starlight. However, all was hushed and dark — not even a skulking Comanche would risk his neck on such a night: now and then an owl would hoot overhead, and the mournful and long-continued howl of the coyote swept across the plain, or a snake rattled as it heard my approaching footstep. When the clouds swept away, and allowed the stars to emit their feeble light, the palms waved in the night air, and raised their nodding heads against the sky, the cry of the coyote became louder, as it was now enabled to pursue its prey, cocuyas flitted amongst the grass like winged sparks of fire, and deer or antelope bounded across my path.

The trail indeed was in many parts invisible, and I had to trust to points of rocks and ridges, and trees which I remembered to have passed the day before, to point out my course. Once, choked with thirst, and utterly exhausted — for I had been travelling since sunrise without food or water — I sank down on the damp ground and slept for a couple of hours, and when I awoke the stars were obscured by heavy clouds, and the darkness prevented me distinguishing an object even a

few feet distant. I had lost my bearings, and was completely confused, not knowing which course to follow. Trusting to instinct, I took what I considered the proper direction, and shortly after, when it again became light enough to see, I regained the path and pushed rapidly on. At length the welcome lowing of cattle satisfied me that I was near the wells where I had stopped the previous day. I soon arrived at the spot, and, lowering the goatskin bucket, buried my head in the cold water, and drank a delicious draught.

At about three in the morning, just as the first dawn was appearing, I knocked at the door of the rancho, and the first voice I heard was that of my mozo, asking lazily, "*Quien llama?* — who calls?"

Every one was soon up, and congratulating me upon being still alive; for when Angel had told them of the loss of the animals, and that I was remaining alone, they gave me up for lost, as the spot where we had encamped was a notorious stopping-place of the Indians when *en route* for the haciendas. I was so fortunate as to find all the animals safe; they were quietly feeding near the cattle-wells when the mozo arrived there. He made some lame excuse for not returning, but I have no doubt his intention had been to make off with them, which, if I had not suspected something

of the sort, and followed him, he would probably have effected.

At daylight I mounted a mule bare-backed, and Angel another; and, leading the remainder, we rode back to the camp, whence we immediately started for Mapimi.

As a punishment for his carelessness and meditated treachery, I obliged the mozo to ride bare-backed the whole distance of nearly sixty miles, and at a round trot. This feat of equitation, which on the straight and razor-like back of an ill-conditioned mule is anything but an easy or comfortable process, elicited from Angel, during his ride, a series of the most pathetic laments on his miserable fate in serving so merciless a master, accompanied by supplications to be allowed to mount the horse which carried his saddle and ran loose. But I was obdurate. He was the undoubted cause, by not having watched the animals, as was his duty, of the delay and loss of time I had suffered, and therefore, as a warning, and as a matter of justice, I administered this salutary dose of "Lynch law," which I have no doubt he remembers to the present moment.

About midday we reached the Hacienda de la Cadena, first passing a vidette stationed on a neighboring hill, on the lookout for the Indians. The hacienda itself was closed, and men were

ready on the azoteas [flat roofs] with guns and bows and arrows, when the approach of strangers was announced by signal from the ranchero on the hill. Just outside the gates were erected several crosses, with their little piles of stones, on which were roughly-cut inscriptions; they were all to the memory of those who had been killed on the spot by Indians.

We stayed at La Cadena merely to water our beasts, the people shouting from the housetop, and asking if we were mad, to travel alone. Angel, to whom I had again intrusted a carbine, answered by striking his hand on the butt of his piece, and vociferating, "*Miren ustedes: somos valientes, que importan los carajos Comanches. Que vengan, y yo los mataré.*"—Look here: we are brave men, and don't care a straw for the rascally Comanches. Only let them come, and I will kill them myself." And the *muchachas* waved their rebosos, and saluted the *valiente*, shouting, "*Adios, buen mozo! mate a los barbaros!*"—God keep you, brave lad! kill the savages." At which Angel waved his gun, in a state of great excitement and present valor, which cooled amazingly when we were out of sight of the hacienda and amongst the dreary chaparrals.

It was ten at night when we reached Mapimi; and, losing the track, we got bewildered in the

darkness, and wandered into a marsh outside the town, the lights of which were apparently quite close at hand: but all our shouting and cries for assistance and a guide were in vain, and caused the inhabitants to barricade their doors, as they thought the Indians were upon them; which panic was probably increased, when at last, guessing at the cause, and *almost* losing my temper, I gave a succession of most correct war-whoops as I floundered through the mud, and fired a volley at the same moment. When, therefore, I at length extricated myself and entered the town, not a living soul was visible, and the lights all extinguished; so, groping my way to the plaza, at one side of which trickled a little stream, I unpacked my mules and encamped, sending the mozo with a *costal* [sack] for a supply of corn for the animals, with which he presently returned, reporting at the same time that the people were half dead with terror. The mules and horses properly cared for, I rolled myself in my blanket in the middle of the street, and went supperless to sleep, after a ride of sixty-five miles.

El Real de Mapimi is situated on a plain at the foot of a mountain called, from its supposed resemblance to a purse, the Bolson de Mapimi. The sierras, which surround the plain, teem with the precious metals; but for some reason, probably

from its situation near the frontier, and its exposure to Indian attacks, they have never been properly worked. The mine near the town, and the *hacienda de beneficios*, belong to an inhabitant of Mapimi, who, without capital or machinery, derives a considerable income even from the primitive method employed in working the mine, which produces gold, silver, lead, and sulphur from the same sierra. My impression is, that the mines of Mapimi, if properly worked, would be the most productive in the country; and the transportation of machinery, by way of the Rio Grande and Monclova, would be practicable, and attended with comparatively little expense.

The town itself is merely a collection of adobe houses, and, with the exception of a cotton-factory,\* the superintendent of which is an Englishman, possesses no trade of any description. The population, of between two and three thousand, live in constant dread of the Indians, who lately entered the town and carried off the mulada belonging to the *hacienda de beneficios* out of the very corrals. The surrounding country is sterile and uninhabited; the villages and ranchos have

\* In the gardens of the factory at Mapimi I noticed several tea-plants, which thrive in this climate and soil, and the leaves of which, I was informed, are of very tolerable flavor.

been deserted, and the fields laid waste by the savages. Between Mapimi and Chihuahua is a large unpeopled tract of country called the *travesia*: it once possessed several thriving villages and ranchos, now deserted and in ruins, where the Indians resort during their incursions, and leave their tired animals to be recruited in the pastures which have sprung up on the once cultivated fields, removing them on their return. A road from Mapimi, now disused for years and overgrown with grass, leads to Chihuahua through these deserted villages, and I determined to follow it, in spite of the bad character assigned to it by the Mexicans on account of its being so much frequented by the Comanches.

Here I gave my mozo, Angel, his congé, and picked up, much to my astonishment, a little Irishman, who had been eighteen years in Mexico, during which time he had passed over nearly the whole republic, excepting New Mexico. He had lost all traces of his Milesian descent, being in character, manners, and appearance a perfect Mexican, and had almost forgotten his own language. Indians moreover had no terrors for him, and he at once agreed to accompany me to Chihuahua, even by way of the *travesia*, "for," said he, "the Indian isn't born who will take my scalp."

During my stay in Mapimi I encamped in the

middle of the plaza, much to the gratification of the peládos \* of the town, who constantly surrounded me, pilfering everything which lay exposed. My reason for preferring the open air, even of a street, was the absence of vermin, which in the houses actually devour the full-blooded *Européo*. The evening before our departure a deputation waited upon me to dissuade me from attempting to cross to Chihuahua. The alcalde even went as far as to say that my new mozo, who was a Mexican citizen, should not be allowed to leave the town; but this I at once overcame by exhibiting my formidable-looking passports and *cartas de seguridad*, or letters of security. They asked how I could expect to escape the Indians? I pointed to my rifle. "*Valgame en Dios!*" was the rejoinder; "*que loco es este Yngles!* — What a madman this Englishman is!"

One event occurred in Mapimi which annoyed me excessively. The night of my arrival, my animals, I fear, were rather scantily supplied with corn; and, to revenge the slight, the mules ate the tail of my beautiful Panchito to the very dock — a tail which I had tied, and combed, and tended with the greatest care and affection. In the

\* Peládo, literally skinless, meaning, in Mexico, the ragged, coatless vagabonds who loaf about the towns and villages.



morning I hardly recognised the animal; his once ornamental appendage looked as if it had been gnawed by rats, and his whole appearance was disfigured. I got a pair of shears, and clipped and cut, but only made matters worse, and was fain to desist after an hour's attempt. The tails of the mules were at the end of my journey picked like a bone, for, whenever their supper was poor, they immediately fell to work on each other's tails.

A perfect levee was held round my camp, which, being in the open square, of course was exposed enough. In this obtrusion, and the pertinacity with which they maintain it, the Mexicans are infinitely more annoying than the Indians themselves. Wrapped in their sarapes, they used to surround my fire, even when I was eating my meals, staring at my every action, and without saying a word. A *peládo* would remain thus motionless for two or three hours, when he would retire for the purpose of eating his dinner, returning after it, and taking up the same position. No hints were strong enough, and no rebuffs had any effect in abating the nuisance: but, frequently losing all temper and patience, I rattled out at them in pretty hearty abuse. Then they would move off, muttering, "*Que sin vergüenza!* — What a shameless, unmannered fellow is this!"

When eating, I found that the most efficacious

way of getting rid of them was by making use of the "invitation" which Spaniards invariably proffer to strangers of any class before commencing a meal: "*Ustedes gustan?*" [have you eaten?] I would ask; and, strangely enough, nothing seemed to insult them more than this. Without the usual answer of "*Mil gracias; buen provecho tenga usted*"—a thousand thanks; may your worship have a good appetite," they invariably slunk away.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE LOST AMERICANS

**O**N the 23rd I left Mapimi, the whole population, I do believe, turning out to see me put my head in the lion's mouth. For thirty-six miles we travelled through an arid chaparral; when, towards sunset, we entered into a more open plain, where we saw the ruined houses of Jarral Grande. The houses had been built round a large open space covered with grass, each one standing in a garden. At the entrance of the village, and scattered along the road, was a perfect forest of crosses, many of them thrown down or mutilated by the Indians. The houses were most of them tumbling to pieces, but some were still entire. The gardens, overrun with a wilderness of weeds, still contained flowers, and melon-vines crept from the enclosures out into the green. In one house that I entered a hare was sitting on the threshold, and some leverets were inside; and on the flat azotea of another sat a large cat. The walls, too, of the ruined houses were covered with creepers, which hung from the broken roofs and about the floors.

I entered another house, which, from its size and appearance, had evidently been the abode of the priest or chief personage of the village. The remains of a recent fire were scattered about the floor, on which were strewed several Indian xuages or drinking-gourds, an arrow, and a human scalp. The Indians had very lately visited the village, and some of them had doubtless taken up their abode in this house, and perhaps, departing before daylight, had left these articles behind them.

There were several cats about the ruins; and, as I entered, four or five enormous ones jumped off a wall where they lay basking in the sun, and concealed themselves in the tangled weeds.

The sun set beautifully on this lonely scene. In the distance, the ragged outline of the sierra was golden with its declining rays, which shed a soft light on the ruins of the village; and everything looked so calm and beautiful, that it was difficult to call to mind that this was once the scene of horrid barbarities.

We took the animals down to the arroyo near the village, and, rifle in hand, watched them as they drank. In the sand at the edge of the stream were numerous marks of horses' feet and moccasin tracks fresh and recent. The Indians had been there that morning, and might very probably return, so it behooved us to be on the watch. We

therefore picketed the mules and horses in the open space in the middle of the village, while we ourselves retreated to the shelter and shadow of a house within pistol-shot, whence we could command all the approaches to the green without being ourselves seen; one standing sentry while the other slept. In the night a number of perfectly wild cattle entered the village, and nearly caused our animals to stampede. One fat young heifer approached to within a few feet of where I was lying watching under a wall, and very nearly tempted me to a shot. Little rest we had that night; and long before daylight, that being the hour when Indians make their attacks, we were up and on the alert.

We were in our saddles before sunrise, and with great difficulty made our way in the dark through the thick chaparral. On approaching a stream called Arroyo de los Indios, or Indian River, I had been warned to be on the look-out as that stream was a favorite stopping-place of the Indians. We crossed near where a broad and freshly-used Indian trail entered it, and halted some distance up the stream from the ford. There were deep holes of the clearest and coldest water in the arroyo, and I enjoyed a most delicious bath. My animals were picketed, and fared badly, the grass being coarse and sparsely scattered amongst the bushes.

We had another night of watchfulness, or rather half a night, for shortly after midnight we again packed the mules and started. This I did on account of the greater security of travelling at night, and in order to reach Jarral Chiquito, if possible, before sunrise, when, if Indians had been encamped there, as was more than probable, we might escape before we were observed. The distance from Jarral Grande to Arroyo de los Indios was forty miles, and from that river to Jarral Chiquito, or Little Jarral, the same. The latter place was also a noted stopping-place of the Indians, and my servant had made up his mind that there we should have some work. To do him justice, however, he was nothing loth, and behaved remarkably well all through this dangerous journey. The sun rose magnificently behind us just before we reached Jarral; and, turning in my saddle, I saw Harry looking hard at it with shaded eyes.

"What's the matter?" I sang out.

"Look, sir — look at the sun rise," he answered: "perhaps we may never have another chance, Don Jorge. I never saw it look so beautiful before."

The plains here abounded in deer, and a bird of the pheasant species called "faisan," and corrupted into "paisano" by the lower classes.

We reached Jarral Chiquito shortly after sun-

rise, and I rode on to reconnoitre. No Indians were there, but plenty of "sign." The village was situated on a hill, near a small spring of salitose water, round which grows a clump of cottonwood, a species of poplar (alamo). The village had been entirely burned by the Indians, with the exception of one house which was still standing, the roof of which they had torn off, and from the upper walls had shot down with arrows all the inmates. Inside were the skeleton of a dog and several human bones. A dreary stillness reigned over the whole place, unbroken by any sound, save the croaking of a bullfrog in the spring, round which we encamped for a few hours. At noon we again started, and travelled on till nearly dark, when we encamped in the middle of a bare plain, without water for the animals, or wood with which to make a fire. The grass, also, was thin, and the poor beasts fared badly, after a journey of more than sixty miles within twenty-four hours. In the night I saw a fire some distance from us, but apparently on the same plain. It was doubtless an encampment of a large party of Indians who passed Guajoquilla the very day of my arrival there.

On the 26th at daybreak we were packed and off, and, after a journey of forty miles, to our great satisfaction we struck the settlements of

Guajoquilla. Before entering the town we crossed a large milpa, where the people were busy cutting and carrying the maize. My sudden appearance put them to flight, and men, women, and children rushed like rabbits to the cover of the maize-canes. They mistook me for an Indian, as I was dressed in a hunting-shirt and fringed leggings; and as the Comanches had passed that very morning, killing some of the laborers in the field, they were justified in their alarm.

Guajoquilla \* is a pretty, quaint little town, with its white-washed adobe houses, and looking clean and neat. The arrival of strangers, and in such an extraordinary garb, and moreover evidently from the travesia and Mapimi, created no little sensation. The people flocked round me, inquiring the *novedades*, and how I had escaped the Indians. Hundreds of houses were placed at my disposal, but, as few of them contained stables or corrals, I rode into a street near the plaza, and, seeing a respectable old dame sitting at a large gate which led to a corral, I invited myself to take up my abode with her, which, with a thousand protestations, she instantly agreed to.

I had hardly dismounted when a tall gaunt figure elbowed its way through the admiring crowd,

\* Cotton is cultivated here, and thrives exceedingly well, as also in the valley of the Nazas.



and, seizing my hand, exclaimed, "Thank God, here's a countryman at last!" and burst into tears. Regarding him with astonishment, I perceived at once that he was an American, and, by his dress of well-worn homespun, evidently a Missourian, and one of the teamsters who accompany the Santa Fé caravans from the United States. He quickly told me his story. He was one of the twenty-one Americans who, as I have before mentioned, left Mr. Spiers' caravan some thirty or forty days before, intending to proceed across the country to the United States, by way of Texas. They had purchased horses and mules at the hacienda of La Sarca; and, without a guide, and knowing nothing of the nature of the country they had to traverse, had entered a tract between the Bolson of Mapimi and the sierras of El Diablo, which is entirely destitute of game and water. Here their animals had nearly all died; and themselves, separating in small parties, had vainly searched for water, remaining for eight days with no other sustenance than the blood of mules, and reduced to the most revolting extremities to assuage their burning thirst. The man before me and another had found their way to a hole of water after several days' travel, near which some pastores (shepherds) were tending a large flock of sheep, and these men had brought them into Guajuquilla.

According to his account, the others must long ere this have perished, for when he left them they were prostrate on the ground, unable to rise, and praying for death. In the hope of recovering some of their effects, his companion, after recruiting his strength, had started back to the spot with some Mexicans, but, meeting a party of Comanches, they had returned without reaching the place.

The next day, however, some vaqueros entered the town bearing six or seven Americans behind their saddles, and towards the evening two more were brought in, making eleven in all who had arrived. Such miserable, emaciated creatures it has never been my lot to see. With long hair and beards, and thin cadaverous faces, with the cheekbones projecting almost through the skin, and their mouths cracked with the drought, they dismounted before my door, weak and scarcely able to stand; most of them had entirely lost their voices, and some were giddy and light-headed with the sufferings they had endured. From their account I had no doubt that ten of their party were perishing in the sierra, or most probably had already expired; for they were entirely exhausted when the last of those who had arrived left the spot where they had been lying.

After ordering my servant to make a large quantity of strong soup for the poor fellows, and

providing for their immediate wants, I proceeded to the alcalde of the place, and told him the story. He at once agreed with me that some steps must be taken to rescue the sufferers if still alive, but he doubted if the people in the town would undertake the expedition, as it was known that the Indians were in the sierras, and in fact in every part, and it was a perfect miracle how the men had reached the town in safety. He also promised me that the men should not be confined, but allowed to go at large on parole, until he had communicated with the governor of Chihuahua, and that a large room should be provided for them, where they would be at perfect liberty.

One of these men, a lean and lank Kentuckian, who, rawboned at any time, was now a perfect skeleton, came up to me, and in a whisper, for his voice was lost for a time, requested to consult me on an important matter. The appearance of the poor fellow was comical in the extreme. His long black hair was combed over his face and forehead, and hung down his back and over his shoulders; and his features, with cheek-bones almost protruding from the skin, wore an indescribably serio-comic expression. He was, in fact, what his appearance indicated, a "Puritan," and his words drawled out of his throat like fathoms of cable, or the sermon of a Methodist preacher.

"Stranger," he said to me, "you have been about the world, I guess, and are likely to know. What," he asked, putting his face close to mine, "might be the worth in your country of a camlet cloak? I never see sech a cloak as that ar one in no parts," he continued, looking up into the sky as if the spectre of the camlet cloak was there. "I've worn that ar cloak more nor ten year, lined right away through with the best kind of bleachin'. Stranger," he continued, "it's a bad fix them poor boys is in, away out thar in them darned dried-up hills, and it jest doubles me up to think on it. Now, I want to know what's the worth of such a fixin' as that ar camlet cloak?" I answered that I could not possibly tell, knowing nothing about such matters. "Well, stranger, all I are got to say is this,—thar ain't sech another cloak as that between this and Louisville, anyhow you can fix it, and I want to know if the gov'ner here will send out to them hills to bring in that ar camlet cloak. It lays jest whar we left them poor boys." I told him that, although I did not think the "governor" would exactly send out a detachment in search of his cloak, yet I had no doubt but that some steps would be taken to rescue the unfortunate men who were left in the sierras, and that if I went myself I would endeavor to recover it for him. This calmed him considerably, and, taking

me by the arm, he said solemnly, "Stranger, I'll thank you for that;" and, turning away, I heard him soliloquizing—"Sech a cloak as that ar ain't nowhere between this and Louisville."

The owner of the lost garment volunteered to accompany me in search of the missing men, for whose recovery he said he would give all he had, even the "camlet cloak;" and I found him the best man of the party. During the journey he rode by my side, the whole subject of his discourse being the merits of the wonderful garment. As we drew near the spot where he had left it, his excitement became intense. He speculated as to how it was lying—was it folded up?—had the rain injured it? &c.; and at last (he had been riding for some time with his head bent forward, and his eyes almost starting from his head), he darted suddenly on, jumped from his horse, and seized upon something lying on the ground. Holding up to my view an old tattered benjamin, with a catskin collar, and its original blue stained to a hundred different hues, he exultingly exclaimed,—“Stranger, h’yar’s the darned old cloak: hurraw for my old camlet cloak!—but darn it, whar’s them poor boys?”

Determined to go myself in search of the Americans, I beat up for volunteers, and soon got four or five rancheros, who were mounted and armed by

the prefect, to agree to accompany me. Eight of the Americans were also sufficiently recovered the next day to be of the party; and about noon we started, sixteen in number, well armed and mounted. The alcalde, before we left, informed the Americans that, although prisoners, he did not hesitate to allow them to proceed under my command, as I had made myself answerable for their return.

Taking an easterly course, we crossed a sierra, and entered upon a broken country dotted with groves of mesquite and palms, and intersected by numerous ravines and cañons. About ten at night we halted for an hour to allow our horses to feed on the damp grass, as there was no water, and afterwards continued our journey at as rapid a rate as the nature of the country would admit. All night we passed through a wild and perfectly desert tract, crossing rough sierras and deep ravines. A large and recent Indian trail crossed the country from north to south, which my Mexican guide said was the main road of the Comanches into the interior. At sunrise we reached a little hole of water, and a few feet beyond it lay the body of a mule which two of the Americans had killed for its blood, not knowing that water was within a few feet of them. No sooner had they gorged themselves with the hot blood than they

discovered the pool, but were so sickened with their previous draught as to be unable to drink. Here we allowed our animals to fill themselves, and immediately rode on without resting. The country became still more broken, and deer were very plentiful. I tumbled over one splendid buck, as he jumped out of a cañon through which we were passing, but we were in too great a hurry to stop to take any of the meat.

Towards evening, after travelling rapidly all the day, we approached the spot where the Americans had left their companions, and I caused the party to separate and spread out, to look for tracks of men or horses. Shortly after one of them stopped and called me to his side. He had discovered the body of a horse which they had left alive when they had last seen their companions. Its swollen tongue and body showed that the poor animal had died from excessive thirst, and was a bad omen of our finding the men alive. A few yards farther on lay another, which had died from the same cause. Presently we reached the spot, and found guns, and blankets, and ammunition, but no signs of the lost men. The ground, hard and rocky, afforded no clue to the course they had followed, but it was evident that they must have taken an opposite course to that from which we had just come, or we must have seen their tracks

in the plains. The horses had been dead at least three days, and had evidently been turned loose to shift for themselves, as they were without ropes. No doubt remained in my mind as to the men's fate. The sierra, with the exception of the hole where we watered our animals, was destitute of water, and in the direction we imagined them to have taken, the country was still more arid, where, if they escaped a miserable death from starvation, they would in all probability encounter an equally certain one at the hands of the Indians.

I learned afterwards, from a Mexican woman who had been carried a prisoner through this very sierra by the Comanches, and afterwards purchased from them by an Indian trader, that, in passing through this desert tract, the Indians are four days and nights without water for their animals, hundreds of which perish on the road.

After an ineffectual search we were obliged to turn back, as our animals had been nearly thirty hours without eating, and were almost exhausted; and here there was no grass or herbage of any description. Our guide now recommended that we should strike a new course, and, instead of returning by the way we came, should cross the sierra by a gap known as the *Puerta del Jabali* — the gate of the wild boar; and by this route we might that night reach an old deserted rancho,



where was good grass, and water for the tired animals. Striking off to the gap, we passed a wide cañon, full of high grass, and literally swarming with deer. As all our provisions were exhausted, I rode ahead and killed a fine doe, which one of the Mexicans threw over his saddle. It was not till late in the night that we reached the old rancho; and at the spring we found several Indian horses, with their backs still wet from the saddle, drinking, while others were feeding around. From the sign I knew that the Indians had been about since sundown, that they had probably left their tired animals here, and would return in the morning, or perhaps during the night. It was necessary therefore to be watchful.

The alamos round the spring of water were black with ravens and crows which were roosting in the branches, and one of the Americans thoughtlessly discharged his rifle at them, which set all the Indian horses scampering off, and greatly annoyed me, as I had intended to have secured them. It might also have had the effect of bringing the Indians upon us, if they were in the neighborhood, as probably they were. I remained *alerto* all night, having two Mexicans on sentry at the same time. The Americans lay snoring round a huge fire, and, as they were very tired, I did not require them to stand guard. As I was going my

rounds I saw a figure crawling on the ground between me and the ruined walls of a house some two hundred yards distant. Assured that it could be no other than an Indian, I threw myself on the ground, and "approached" it, as the hunters say, cautiously and without noise. The figure was also "approaching" me, and we gradually drew near each other; and I then perceived what I imagined to be an Indian in the very act of drawing his bow upon me. My rifle was instantly at my shoulder, and in another moment would have discharged its contents, when the figure rose on its legs and cried out, "*No tire, no tire, por dios; soy amigo* — don't fire; I'm a friend;" — and I saw, sure enough, that it was one of the Mexicans, but, dressed in a brown sarape, and with his long black hair and dark face, and armed with bow and arrow, he might easily be mistaken for an Indian.

About four in the afternoon next day we rode into Guajoquilla, and, before I had dismounted, Don Augustin Garcia, the prefect, followed by a crowd, accosted me: —

"*Que novedades?*" he asked. "Nothing," I answered.

"*Pues aqui tiene usted muchas* — well, here we have plenty of bad news for you. The robbers have broken into your room, and stolen all your baggage."

"*Pues,*" I answered, "*si no hay remedio* — if it can't be helped, it can't."

My servant now made his appearance, with a face as white as a sheet; I had given him strict orders, when I started, on no account to leave the house until my return. The night before, however, he had been induced by the robbers to go to a fandango, where they locked him in a room for several hours with a party of men and women drinking and dancing. When he returned to the house he found the door of my room, which was entered from the street, open, and, thinking that I had returned, he went into the house, and, awakening the women, asked them when I had come back. They told him that I was not yet returned, and he replied, "He must be, for his door was wide open."

At this out jumped the patrona from her bed: "*Ladronas! ladronas!*" she cried out, instantly guessing what had happened. Striking a light, the whole household entered my room, and found it stripped of everything. The robbers had actually carried off the matting of my packsaddles; trunks and saddles, guns, pistols, sword, and all were gone; and in one of the packs were some three thousand dollars, so they had made a good night's work of it. My servant was in despair; his first idea was to run, for I would kill him, he said, as

soon as I arrived. The old patrona did not lose her presence of mind; she rushed to her sala, and snatched from the wall a little image of El Niño de Atocha, a juvenile saint of extraordinary virtue. Seizing my distracted mozo by the shoulders, she forced him on his knees, and, surrounded by all the women of the family, vowed to the uplifted saint three masses, the cook on her part a penance, and my servant a mass likewise, if the stolen goods were recovered, besides scores of Pater Nosters, dozens of Ave Marias, &c., &c. Having done this, as she told me when giving a history of the affair, her heart became calm; the blessed child of Atocha had never deserted her, a lone widow, with only a *buellada* of two hundred cattle to depend upon, and her husband killed by the *barbaros*; and she felt assured that by the saint's means the things would be recovered. "The scandal, she said, "the '*infamia*' of the robbery taking place in her house!" and a stranger too to be plundered, "*lejos de su patria y sus amigos; ay que lastima, que infamia!* — far from his country and his friends; what an atrocity!"

The prefect, Don Augustin, was soon on the scent; one man was already suspected, who had been seen in front of the house late on the night of the robbery, and, passing by frequently, had attracted the attention of my patrona. My mozo,

pistol in hand, went to the house of this man and collared him, and when I arrived had already lodged him in the *calaboza*. Two others were shortly after taken on suspicion of being accomplices.

"*No hay cuidado* — there is no fear," said Don Augustin; "we'll get everything back; I have put them to the torture, and they have already confessed to the robbery."

My servant, who witnessed the operation, said it was beautiful to see the prefect screwing a confession out of them. Their necks and feet were placed in two different holes, which by means of a screw, were brought together until every muscle of the body and limbs was in a frightful state of tension, and the bones almost dislocated. At length they divulged where one trunk was concealed, and then another, and after two or three faintings, one article after another was brought to light. In the intervals the prefect rushed to me, wiping the perspiration from his forehead.

"*No hay cuidado, no hay cuidado*; we'll have everything out of them. They have just now fainted off, but when they recover they shall be popped in again."

At last everything was recovered but a small dirk-knife with a mother-of-pearl handle, which defied screwing, and I begged Don Augustin not

to trouble himself about it, as everything else was safe. But "No," he said, "*No hay cuidado, no hay cuidado*; we'll have everything out of them; strangers must not be robbed with impunity in my prefecture." However, it took another violent screw, and the poor wretch, with eyes starting out of his head, cried out at last to stop, and pulled out of his pocket the missing knife, which he had doubtless determined to keep, on the principle of having "something for his money."

The chief delinquent was the priest's nephew, and most of the stolen property was concealed in the reverend gentleman's garden. To do him justice, however, the padre was very active in his attempts to recover my property, and stood by his nephew, when under the process of the screw, to exhort him to confession, or administer extreme unction if it was necessary.

When everything had been brought back, my good old patrona rushed to me with El Santo Niño de Atocha, which she begged of me to kiss, at the same time hanging it in my room to protect it from another spoliation. That evening I was sitting at the door, enjoying a chat with the *señoritas de la casa*, and a *cigarro*, when I saw a figure, or rather the trunk, of a woman, moving along on what appeared to be the stumps of legs, enveloped in a cloud of dust, as she slowly crept

along the road. She passed three or four times, going and returning upwards of a hundred yards, and earnestly praying the while. "*Por Dios*," I asked of one of the girls — "for God's sake, what's this?"

✻ "*Es Dolores, la concinera* — it's Dolores, the cook — performing penance," was the answer; and her vow instantly recurred to me. The poor old body had vowed to walk so many hundred yards on her knees in the public streets, repeating at the same time a certain number of Ave Marias, if the credit of the family was restored by the discovery of the thief and the recovery of my property.

I had a large pot of soup kept always on the fire, to which the half-starved Americans had access whenever they felt inclined, and, as I was sitting at the door, several of them passed into the house, brushing by the muchachas without the usual "*con su licencia*," much to the indignation of the ladies.

It is a general impression amongst the lower classes in Mexico that the Americans are half savages, and perfectly uncivilized. The specimens they see in Northern Mexico are certainly not remarkably polished in manners or appearance, being generally rough backwoodsmen from Missouri. They go by the name of "*burros*," — jackasses;

and have the reputation of being infidels who worship the devil, &c. I was trying to explain to my female friends that the Americans were a very civilized people, and a great portion of them of the same religion as their own, but they scouted the idea; the priests had told them the contrary, and now they saw with their own eyes that they were burros.

"*Ni saludan las mugeres!*" indignantly exclaimed a dark beauty, as a conclusive argument—"they do not even salute the women when they pass"—as, just at that moment, a Missourian, six feet high in his moccasins, stepped over her head as she sat on the sill of the gate.

"*Ni saludan las mugeres,*" she repeated; "you see it yourself. *Ah, no, por Dios, son burros, y muy sin vergüenzas*—they are jackasses, and entirely without shame. *Valgame Dios, que hombres tan fieros!*—what wild men they are!"

In the northern part of Mexico beds are unknown in the ranchos, and even in the houses of respectable people. A species of mattress is spread upon the floor at night, on which the sheets and mantas are laid, and in the daytime is rolled up against the wall, and, neatly folded and covered with a gay manta, forms a settee or sofa. Chairs are not used, and at meals the dishes are placed on the ground, and the guests sit round in



Indian fashion, and dip their tortillas into the dish. A triangular piece of tortilla is converted into a spoon, and soup even is eaten in this way. Spoons are seldom met with even in the houses of the ricos, the use of the tortilla being universal.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### KING OF THE MINE

ON the 3rd of November I left Guajoquilla, under the escort of ten thousand blessings heaped upon me by my kind-hearted hostess and her family, and under the especial protection of the "holy infant of Atocha." We left after dark, as, on account of the *novedades*, it was deemed not only prudent, but indispensable to safety, to travel in the night. About two in the morning I was riding along muffled in my sarape, for it was piercingly cold, and half asleep at the time, when I descried ahead of me several camp-fires a little off the road. I at once set them down as Indians, as they had been seen the previous day between Guajoquilla and La Remada, and instantly stopped the cavallada. Dismounting, I took my rifle, and approached to reconnoitre, creeping up to within a few yards of the fire, where lay snoring a picket of soldiers, while a large body lay bivouacked around. I now remembered that a detachment was out, under the command of one Colonel

Amendares, a noted *matador de Indios*, for the purpose of surprising a body of Indians which had passed the Conchos, and would probably return by this route. Their anxiety to *surprise* the Indians was evident by the position they had chosen for their ambushade, being bivouacked in the very middle of the Indian road, and under a high ridge of hills, over which the Indians had to pass, and from whence they could not fail to discover their position. When I regained my horse, and passed close to their fires, I saluted them with a war-whoop which threw the whole camp into a ferment.

A little after sunrise we reached the rancho of La Remada, where was a detachment of troops to protect the people from the Indians; and we halted here, to feed the animals, for two or three hours, after which we resumed our journey to Santa Rosalia. Just before entering the town I killed an antelope in the road. The animal ran to within a hundred yards of my horse, when it stopped and looked at me, giving me time to knock it over from my saddle.

Santa Rosalia is a little dirty place, and has been selected by the Governor of Chihuahua as a point to be defended against the anticipated advance of the Americans. With this object they were busily engaged throwing up walls and para-

pets, and cutting ditches; but all their work could not convert it into a tenable position.

I put up in the house of an American who has a little "dry-goods" store in the town, and in the middle of the night was called up by a violent knocking at the gate. As the mob had been talking of revenging themselves for the defeat sustained by the Mexican troops at Monterey the other day, by sacking the two unfortunate little stores belonging to Americans, my host thought his time was come, but, resolving to die game, came to me to assist in defending the house. We therefore carried all the arms into the store, and placed them on the counter, which served as a parapet for our bodies. The door of the shop opened into the street, and behind it we could hear the clanking of swords and other warlike noises. Presently a loud knock, and a voice exclaimed "*Abra la puerta.*"

"*Quien es?*" I asked — Who is it? No answer; but "*Abra la puerta!* — open the door" — repeated. However, finding that we paid no attention to the request, another summons was tried, with the addition of "*En el nombre del General* — in the name of the General — who has sent me, his *ayudante*, to speak with the master of this house." With this "open sesame" we unbarred the door to the General's aide-de-camp, a ferocious-

looking individual with enormous moustache and clattering sabre.

"Where," he asked, in an authoritative voice, "is this American spy who entered the town to-day and concealed himself in this house?" No answer. Question repeated with like effect. The moustached hero grinned with rage, and turned to his followers, saying, "You see this;" and then, turning to us, said, "It is the General's order that every foreigner in this house immediately attend at his quarters, where you will answer for harboring a spy," turning to the master of the house.

We speedily donned our clothes, and appeared at the house of the General, who was sitting in a room waiting our arrival. Without waiting for any explanation, I immediately presented my credentials, saying, "*Hi tiene usted, mi General, mis pasapuestas y carta de seguridad,*" which, to the dissatisfaction of the *ayudante*, after glancing at, he returned with a low bow, and many apologies for disturbing me at so late an hour.

It happened to be the feast of Las Animas, when money is collected by the priests for the purpose of praying souls out of purgatory, which on this day is done by wholesale. If money is not to be had, the collectors, usually children, with little boxes which have holes in which the coin is dropped, receive corn or beans; the con-

tribution of my landlord being a couple of tallow candles, which no doubt were efficacious in getting some unhappy soul out of several years' pawn, and perhaps were useful in greasing the way, as the donor remarked, to the exit of some orthodox pelàdo.

Leaving Santa Rosalia on the 5th, we proceeded to Los Saucillos, a small Indian village, the population of which is entirely employed in mining on their own account. It is situated on the Conchos, here a broad but shallow stream, which runs into the Del Norte above the presidio of that name: this village is thirty-six miles from Santa Rosalia. The gambucinos, or independent miners, are a class *sui generis*. Their gains depend entirely upon the bonanza, or the chance of striking a rich vein, which, with their system of grubbing and pickaxing at random, is a rare event. Still they work on year after year, with the golden vision of a bonanza ever before their eyes, which will at once raise them to comparative wealth; and, stimulated by the hope, abandon all other labor for the speculative toil of mining. Thus, in these petty *reales*,\* a scarcity of provisions, and even of the necessaries of life, is very apparent. The gambucinos are glad to sell

\* Mines were, and are still called reales — royal — being, in the time of the Spaniards, the property of the crown.

their pieces of ore, and even pure metal, for coin considerably less than their value; and the traveller is frequently offered little lumps of silver, and even gold, in exchange for money or articles of clothing.

In this village there was a large empty *hacienda de beneficios*, full of scorix and dross, which covered the floor in heaps, with tumble-down furnaces and mouldering apparatus long disused. Here I took up my abode, with the permission of an old Indian, who, perfectly naked save for a small piece of leather round his loins, was superintending some smelting process in a furnace in one corner of the building. There was abundance of room for myself and animals, who ate their corn out of the washing-troughs, and my supper was cooked on a little fire of charcoal made on the ground, the old Indian joining me in the repast, and telling me long stories of the former riches of the mine, and the hundred times that he had been on the point of securing bonanzas.

He was, he told me, the most scientific man in the place, knew the probable value of a lode at first sight, and was *muy aficionado a los beneficios* — very expert in the process of extracting metal from ore. There had been a time when he made his two and three dollars a day, and ore was plentiful; but now the sierras were full of *mala*

*gente* — demons and bad spirits — who snatched out of their fingers all the metal. He knew a mountain, where one had only to strike his pick-axe and grub up virgin silver at every blow; but it was presided over by a *demonio*, whose heart was hard as granite, and who changed the silver into lead when a gambucino made his appearance. Other sierras there were, he said, *muy lejos* — very far off — where he had been with his father when a boy, and procured much silver; but, shortly after, the Indians made their appearance in that country and killed all they found at work, and they had never been revisited. *Tierra muy rica, y llena de plata* — a very rich country it was, and full of silver.

He had, he told me, in his youth worked in the mine of Sombrerete, and had earned many a dollar in the bonanzas of the celebrated Veta Negra, the black vein (a lode of metal which yielded an extraordinary quantity of silver). He stayed at Sombrerete until this lode was worked out, and the cause of its failure he narrated to me in the following wonderful story, which he related with the utmost gravity and most perfect seriousness. His gesticulations, and the solemn asseverations of the truth of the story with which he frequently interrupted it, greatly amused me; and perhaps no more appropriate locale for the



narration of such a tale could be found, than the spot in which we then were sitting. In the large vaulted building, with its earthen walls covered with mould, and deep recesses, into which the blaze from the fire scarcely penetrated, the old Indian sat cowering over the fire, his sharp, attenuated features lit up with animation as he narrated his story, stopping occasionally to puff from his mouth and nose a cloud of tobacco-smoke, and drawing round his naked figure a tattered blanket, as a cold blast of wind rushed through chinks in the dilapidated wall. In nearly these words he repeated

THE LEGEND OF THE BLACK VEIN OF SOMBRERETE  
("LA VETA NEGRA DE SOMBRERETE").

"*Ojala por los dias de oro!* — oh for the days of gold" — sighed the old gambucino: "*pero ya se acabó todo eso* — but *that* is all over now; *ni oro, ni plata hay* — neither gold nor silver is to be had now-a-days for picking or digging. *Pedaxitos, no mas* — little bits one grubs up here and there; *pero SE ACABO LA VETA NEGRA* — but the black vein, the black vein; *onde esta?* — where is it? Worked out long ago.

"I was no older than your worship in those days, and my back was strong. *Valgame madre santissima!* but I could pack the ore nimbly in

the mine and up the shaft. Ay, and *then* all worked with a will, for it was all *bonanza*: day after day, month after month, year after year, there we were at the same old vein; and the more we cut into it the richer it grew. *Ay que plata!* Oh what silver came out of that old vein! *blanco, rico, pesado* — white, rich, and heavy it was — all silver, all silver. Five hundred pesos *fuertes* I made in one week. *Que hermosa era aquella veta negra!* — what a beautiful little vein was that black one!

“But your worship yawns, and my poor old head turns round when it thinks of that time. *Pues, señor.* All the miners (for there were no gambucinos then) were making dollars as fast as they could, but the more they got the more they wanted, although not one of the laziest but had more than he ever before had dreamed of possessing. However, they were not satisfied, and all complained because they did not strike a richer vein than the old *veta negra* — as if that were possible!

“The most dissatisfied of all the miners was a little deformed man called Pepito, who did nothing but swear at and curse his bad luck, although he had made enough money to last three of his lives; and the miserly style in which he lived was the by-word of everybody.

“However, whether it was from a bitterness of

spirit caused by his deformity, or from genuine badness of heart, Pepito was continually grumbling at the old vein, calling it by every opprobrious epithet which he could summon to the end of his tongue, and which was enough to break the heart of any vein, even of iron.

"One night — it was the fiesta of San Lorenzo — all the miners were away in the town, for they had agreed to give themselves a holiday; but Pepito took his basket and pick, and declared his intention of remaining to work: 'for,' said he, 'what time have I for holiday, when, with all my work, work, work, I only get enough out of that stony old vein to keep me in frijolitos, without a taste of pulque, since — *quien sabe?* — how long ago? *Maldita sea la veta, digo yo* — curse such a vein, say I!'

"*Valgame Dios!* — this to the black vein, the black vein of Sombrerete!" apostrophized the old gambucino.

"Now your worship knows, of course (but *quien sabe?* for foreigners are great fools), that every mine has its metal-king, its *mina-padre*, to whom all the ore belongs. He is, your worship knows, not a man, nor a women, but a spirit — and a very good one, if he is not crossed or annoyed; and when the miners curse or quarrel at their work, he often cuts off the vein, or changes

it to heavy lead or iron; but when they work well and hard, and bring him a good stock of cigarros, or leave him in the gallery, when they quit the mine, a little bottle of pulque or mezcal, then he often sends bonanzas, and plenty of rich ore.

"Well, every one said, when they heard Pepito's determination to remain alone in the mine, and after he had so foully abused the celebrated *veta negra*, '*Valgame!* if Pepito doesn't get a visit from *padre-mina* to-night, it's because he has borrowed holy water or a *rosarioncito* from Father José, the cura of Sombrerete.'

"We were all going to work again at midnight, but the mezcal was so good that none stirred from the pulqueria long after that hour. I, however, shouldered my pick and trudged up the hill to the shaft, first waking up the watchman, who lay snoring at the gate of the hacienda, wrapped in his sarape. I took him with me to the mouth of the shaft, that he might lower me down in the basket; and down I went. When I got to the bottom I called to Pepito, for, knowing he was working there, I had not brought a lantern, but heard nothing save the echo of my own voice, sounding hollow and loud, as it vibrated through the passages and galleries of the mine. Thinking he might be asleep, I groped my way to where

we had been working the great lode in the morning, thinking to find him in that direction, and hallooing as I crept, but still no answer; and when I shouted '*Pepito, Pepito, onde esta?*'—where are you?—the echo cried jeeringly, '*Onde esta?*'

“At length I began to get frightened. Mines, everybody knows, are full of devils, and gnomes, and bad spirits of every kind; and here was I, at midnight, alone, and touching the ‘black vein’ which had been so abused. I did not like to call again to Pepito, for the echo frightened me, and I felt assured that the answer was made by some unearthly voice, and came direct from the lode of the *veta negra*, that we were working. I crept back to the bottom of the shaft, and, looking up to the top, where the sky showed no bigger than a tortilla, with one bright star looking straight down, I shouted for the watchman to lower the basket and draw me up; but, holy mother! my voice seemed to knock itself to pieces on the sides of the shaft as it struggled up, and when it reached the top must have been a whisper. I sat down and fairly cried, when a loud shout of laughter rattled along the galleries, and broke as it were up the shaft; I trembled like quicksilver, and heavy drops of perspiration dropped from my forehead to the ground. There was another shout of laughter, and a voice cried out —

“ ‘Come here, Mattias, come here.’

“ ‘Where, most wonderful señor?’ I asked, thinking it as well to be respectful.

“ ‘Here, here to the black vein, the old leaden, useless vein,’ cried the voice, mockingly; and I thought with horror of the abuse it had that day received.

“ Half dead with fear, I crept along the gallery, and turning an abrupt angle, came upon the lode we had been working. *Ave Maria purissima!* what a sight met my eyes! The gallery seemed a mass of fire, yet there was no blaze and no heat. The rock which contained the vein of ore, and the ore itself, were like solid fire; and yet it wasn’t fire, for there was no heat, as I said, but a glare so bright that one could see away into the rock, which seemed to extend miles and miles; and every grain of quartz, and even the smallest particle of sand, of which it was composed, was blazing with light, and shone separately like a million diamonds knocked in one; and yet the eye saw miles into the bowels of the earth, and every grain of sand was thus lit up. But if the stone, and the grit, and the sand were thus fiery bright, and the eye scorched to look upon it, what words can describe the glitter of the *vein*, now of sparkling silver, and white, as it were, with flame, but over which a *black blush* now and then shot, and

instantaneously disappeared? It wanted not this, however, to tell me that I was looking at the endless *veta negra*, the scorned, abused black vein, which throbbed, miles and miles away into the earth, with virgin silver, enough to supply the world for worlds to come.

“‘Ha, ha, ha!’ roared the voice; ‘the *old leaden, useless vein*. Where’s the man that can eat all this silver’s worth of frijolitos? Bring him here, bring him here.’ And forthwith a thousand little sparkling figures jumped out of the scintillating rock, and, springing to the ground, ringing like new-coined pesos, they seized upon the body of Pepito, which I had not till now observed, who lay, blue with fear, in a corner of the gallery, and, lifting him on their shoulders, brought him in front of the silver vein. The brightness of the metal scorched his eyes, which still could not, even in his fear, resist feasting on the richness of the glittering lode.

“‘*Bonanza, una bonanza!*’ shouted the enraptured miner, forgetting his situation, and the presence he was in, for the figure (if figure it can be called, which was like a mist of silver fire) of the *padre-mina* — the mine-king — was now seen sitting in state on the top of the vein.

“‘*Bonanza!*’ shouted the same voice derisively; ‘*bonanza, from an old leaden, useless vein!*’

repeating the terms which Pepito had used in abusing it. 'Where's the man can eat this silver's worth of frijolitos?'

"'What does he deserve who has thus slighted the silver king?' 'Turn him to lead, lead, lead!' answered the voice. 'Away with him then.'

"The thousand sparkling silverines seized the struggling miner. 'Not lead, not lead,' he shouted; 'anything but lead!' But they held him fast by the legs, and bore him opposite the lode.

"The rock sparkled up into a thousand times more brilliant corruscations than before, and for an instant I thought my eyes would have 'burned' with looking at the silver vein, so heavenly bright it shone. An instant after a void remained in the rock; a horrid black void. The vein had disappeared, but the rock itself was still as bright as ever, all but the black opening which yawned from out the brightness; and opposite this stood the thousand silverines, bearing the body of the luckless gambucino.

"'Uno, dos, TRES,' shouted the mine-king; and at the word '*tres*'—with a hop, skip, and a jump—right into the gaping hollow sprang the thousand silverines, with the luckless miner on their shoulders, whose body, the instant that his heels



disappeared into the opening, with these very eyes I saw turned to lead.

"Santa Maria! then all became dark, and I fell senseless to the ground.

"When I recovered a little, I thought to myself, now will come my turn; but, hoping to conciliate the angry mine-king, I sought, in the breast of my shirt, for a bottle of mezcal, which I remembered I had brought with me. There was the bottle, but without a single drop of liquor. This puzzled me; but when I called to mind the fiery spectacle I had just witnessed, I felt no doubt but that the liquor had been dried up in the bottle by the great heat.

"However, I was not molested, and in a short time the miners returned to their work, and, finding me pale and trembling, called me *tonto*, *boracho* — drunk and mad. We proceeded to the lode and grubbed away, but all we succeeded in picking out were a few lumps of poor lead-ore; and from that day not a dollar's worth of silver was ever drawn from the famous 'black vein of Sombrerete.' "

On the 6th we made a short day's journey to San Pablo, a little town on a confluent of the Conchos, in the midst of a marshy plain. Arrived

in the plaza, I had despatched my servant in search of a corral, and was myself taking care of the animals, when a caballero came out of a house in the square, and very politely invited me to take up my quarters with him for the night, and place the mulada in his stables. This offer I gladly accepted, and was presently shown into a large comfortable room, and, moreover, invited to dinner with my entertainer and his friends. The dinner was served on a table — an unusual luxury; but knife, fork, or spoon, there was none. Before commencing, at a signal from his master, the mozo in attendance said a long grace, at the conclusion of which every one crossed himself devoutly and fell to. One large tumbler of water was placed in the centre of the table, but the custom is not to drink until the meal is finished; so that, if a stranger lays hold of the glass during dinner, he is instantly stopped by the host, who tells him "*que viene otra cosa*," that something else is coming.

The next morning I was in the act of making a very long entry in my note-book, to the effect that at last I had met with hospitality in Mexico, when the mozo presented himself with a bill of yesterday's entertainment: *seis reales por la comida* — dinner, six reals — and out came the leaf of my memorandum-book, *al instante*.

In Guajoquilla I had been tempted to purchase a very beautiful "*entero*," an alazan, or blood chestnut stallion, with long flowing tail and mane, and a perfect specimen of a Mexican *caballo de paseo*; the most showy and spirited, and at the same time most perfectly good-tempered animal I ever mounted, and so well trained, that I frequently fired at game, resting the rifle on its back, without its moving a muscle. It had travelled, without shoes, and over a flinty road, from Guajoquilla, and had become so sore-footed that I feared I should be compelled to leave it behind me; but hearing that there was an American blacksmith in San Pablo, I paid him a visit for the purpose of getting him to shoe the alazan; but unluckily he had no shoes by him, nor the wherewithal to make a set. Strange to say, that although at this time the horse was so lame that I feared he had foundered altogether, before reaching Chihuahua, and over a very hard road, his feet entirely recovered their soundness, and the next day he travelled without the slightest difficulty.

On the 7th, leaving San Pablo, I met a caravan of wagons from Chihuahua, with a number of officers and families, who were leaving that city from fear of the Americans, who were reported to be on their way to attack it. Amongst the party

was the celebrated Andalusian matador Bernardo, who with his troop of bullfighters had been lately attacked by the Indians, and nearly all of them killed — himself escaping after a desperate sword-fight and many severe wounds. We passed the Cañada, a deep ravine, through which runs a small stream, and where are the ruins of an Indian fort. It is dreaded by travellers, as here the Indians attack them from behind rocks, without exposure to themselves. In the Cañada we met a couple of priests, with several pupils, on their way to Durango college: they were all well mounted and armed. Shortly after passing the deserted rancho of Bachimba, we met a General with his escort, "making himself scarce" from Chihuahua; and as they were in the act of encamping, and not wishing to remain in the neighborhood of the pilfering *soldados*, I rode on, although it was then sunset, and encamped several miles beyond, where unluckily the stream was dry, and no water procurable.

The next morning, at sunrise, we started for Chihuahua, crossing a plain abounding with antelope, and reached that city about two o'clock. The first appearance of the town from a neighboring hill is extremely picturesque, its white houses, church-spires, and the surrounding gardens affording a pleasing contrast to the barren

plain which surrounds it. I was most hospitably received by an English family resident in the town, who had the exclusive management of the mint and the numerous mines in the neighborhood. In this remote and but semi-civilized city, I was surprised to find that they had surrounded themselves with all the comforts, and many of the luxuries, of an English home; and the kindness I here experienced almost spoiled me for the hardships and privations I met with in my subsequent journey.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE BARBARIANS OF THE NORTH

**C**HIHUAHUA, the capital city of the state or department of that name, was built towards the close of the seventeenth century; and therefore cannot boast of such antiquity even as the more remote city of Santa Fé. Its population is between eight and ten thousand permanent inhabitants; although it is the resort of many strangers from New Mexico, California, and Sonora. The cathedral, which is considered by the American traders one of the finest structures in the world, is a large building in no style of architecture, but with rather a handsome façade, embellished with statues of the twelve apostles.

Opposite the principal entrance, over the portals which form one side of the square, were dangling the grim scalps of one hundred and seventy Apaches, who had lately been most treacherously and inhumanly butchered by the Indian hunters in the pay of the state. The scalps of men, women, and children were brought into the

town in procession, and hung as trophies, in this conspicuous situation, of Mexican valor and humanity!

The unfinished convent of San Francisco, commenced by the Jesuits prior to their expulsion from the country, is also a conspicuous mass of masonry and bad taste. It is celebrated as having been the place of confinement of the patriot Hidalgo, the Mexican Hampden, who was executed in a yard behind the building in 1811. A monument to his memory has been erected in the Plaza de Armas, a pyramid of stone, with an inscription eulogistic of that *one* honest Mexican.

The town also boasts a *Casa de Moneda*, or mint, under the management of an English gentleman, where silver, gold, and copper are coined, and an *aduana*, or customhouse. An aqueduct conveys water to the city from the neighboring stream, the work of the former Spanish government: it is small, and badly constructed.

The shops are filled with goods of the most paltry description, brought mostly from the United States by way of Santa Fé. The cotton goods called "domestics" in the United States are, however, of good quality, and in great demand. Traders arriving in Chihuahua either sell their goods in bulk to resident merchants, or, open-

ing a store, retail them on their own account; but the latter method occasions great delay and inconvenience, the payments being made in copper and small coins, which it is difficult to exchange for gold, and are not current out of the state.

The trade between the United States and Santa Fé and Chihuahua presents a curious feature in international commerce. The capital embarked in it must exceed a million of dollars, which, however, is subject to great risks, not only on account of the dangers to be apprehended in passing the vast prairies, both from Indian attacks and the loss of animals by the severity of the climate, but from the uncertainty of the laws in force in the remote departments of Mexico with regard to the admission of goods and the duties exacted on them.

It appears that in the "port" of Santa Fé the ordinary *derechos de arancel*, or customs duties, have been laid aside, and a new tariff substituted, by the late Governor Armijo, who, instead of levying the usual ad valorem duties on goods imported from the United States, established the system of exacting duties on "*wagon-loads*," without reference to the nature of the goods contained in them, each wagon paying 500 dollars, whether large or small. The injustice of such an impost was apparent, since the merchant,



who carried an assortment of rich and valuable goods into the interior of the country for the fair of San Juan and the markets of the capital and larger cities, paid the same duty as the petty trader on his wagon-load of trumpery for the Santa Fé market.

Moreover, the revenue of the customs must have suffered in an equal ratio, for the traders, to avoid the duties, crowded two or more ordinary wagon-loads into one huge one, and thus saved the duties on two wagons. Notwithstanding this, however, the system still prevails, much to the dissatisfaction of those who, in the former state of things, could, by the skilful application of a bribe, pass any amount of goods at almost nominal expense.

The state of Chihuahua produces gold, silver, copper, iron, saltpetre, &c.; indeed, it is productive in mineral wealth alone, for the soil is thin and poor, and there is everywhere a great scarcity of water. It is, moreover, infested with hostile Indians, who ravage the whole country, and prevent many of its most valuable mines from being worked. These Indians are the Apaches, who inhabit the ridges and plains of the Cordillera, the Sierra Madre on the west, and the tracts between the Conchos and Del Norte on the east, while scattered tribes roam over all parts of the state, com-

mitting devastations on the ranchos and haciendas, and depopulating the remote villages.

For the purpose of carrying on a war against the daring savages a species of company was formed by the Chihuahueros, with a capital raised by subscription. This company, under the auspices of the government, offered a bounty of 50 dollars a scalp, as an inducement to people to undertake a war of extermination against the Apaches. One Don Santiago Kirker, an Irishman, long resident in Mexico, and for many years a trapper and Indian trader in the far West, whose exploits in Indian killing would fill a volume, was placed at the head of a band of some hundred and fifty men, including several Shawanee and Delaware Indians, and sent *en campaña* against the Apaches. The fruits of the campaign were the trophies I saw dangling in front of the cathedral.

In the month of August, the Apaches being then "*en paz*" with the state, entered, unarmed, the village of Galeana, for the purpose of trading. This band, which consisted of a hundred and seventy, including women and children, was under the command of a celebrated chief, and had no doubt committed many atrocities on the Mexicans; but at this time they had signified their desire for peace to the government of Chihuahua, and were now trading in good faith, and under pro-

tection of the faith of treaty. News of their arrival having been sent to Kirker, he immediately forwarded several kegs of spirits, with which they were to be regaled, and detained in the village until he could arrive with his band. On a certain day, about ten in the morning, the Indians being at the time drinking, dancing, and amusing themselves, and *unarmed*, Kirker sent forward a messenger to say that at such an hour he would be there.

The Mexicans, when they saw him approach with his party, suddenly seized their arms and set upon the unfortunate Indians, who, without even their knives, attempted no resistance, but, throwing themselves on the ground when they saw Kirker's men surrounding them, submitted to their fate. The infuriated Mexicans spared neither age nor sex; with fiendish shouts they massacred their unresisting victims, glutting their long pent-up revenge of many years of persecution. . . .

A hundred and sixty men, women, and children were slaughtered, and, with the scalps carried on poles, Kirker's party entered Chihuahua — in procession, headed by the Governor and priests, with bands of music escorting them in triumph to the town.

Nor is this a solitary instance of similar barbarity, for on two previous occasions parties of American traders and trappers perpetrated most

treacherous atrocities on tribes of the same nation on the river Gila. The Indians on their part equal their more civilized enemies in barbarity; and such is the war of extermination carried on between the Mexicans and Apaches.

But to return to Chihuahua. The state, which comprises an area of 107,584 square miles, contains only 180,000 inhabitants (and this is probably an exaggerated estimate), or not two inhabitants to the square mile. Of this vast territory not twenty square miles are under cultivation, and at least three-fifths is utterly sterile and unproductive. The city of Chihuahua is distant from Mexico, in a direct line, 1250 miles, and from the nearest seaport, Guaymas, in the Gulf of California, over an almost impracticable country, 600 miles. Thus its isolated position and comparative worthlessness to Mexico are apparent.

Chihuahua is a paradise for sportsmen. In the sierras and mountains are found two species of bears — the common black or American bear, and the grizzly bear of the Rocky Mountains. The last are the most numerous, and are abundant in the sierras in the neighborhood of Chihuahua. The *carnero cimarron* — the big-horn or Rocky Mountain sheep — is also common on the Cordillera. Elk, black-tailed deer, *cola-prieta* (a large species of the fallow deer), the common red

deer of America, and antelope, abound on all the plains and sierras. Of smaller game, peccaries (javali), also called *cojamete*, hares, and rabbits are everywhere numerous; and beavers are still found in the Gila, the Pecos, the Del Norte, and their tributary streams. Of birds — the faisan, commonly called *paisano*, a species of pheasant: the quail, or rather a bird between a quail and a partridge, is abundant; while every variety of snipe and plover is found on the plains, not forgetting the *gruya*, of the crane kind, whose meat is excellent. There are also two varieties of wolf — the white, or mountain wolf; and the coyote, or small wolf of the plains, whose long-continued and melancholy howl is an invariable adjunct to a Mexican night encampment.

But, perhaps, in all departments of natural history the entomologist would find the plains of Chihuahua most prolific in specimens. I have counted seventy-five varieties of grasshoppers and locusts, some of enormous size, and most brilliant and fantastic colors.

There is also an insect peculiar to this part of Mexico — at least I have not met with it excepting on the plains of Durango and Chihuahua, neither have I met with more than one traveller who has observed it, although it is most curious and worthy of attention. This insect is from four

to six inches in length, and has four long and slender legs. The body appears to the naked eye to be nothing more than a blade of grass, without the slightest muscular action or appearance of vitality, excepting in the antennæ, which are two in number, and about half an inch in length. They move very slowly on their long legs, and resemble a blade of grass being carried by ants. I saw them several times before examining them minutely, thinking that they were in fact bits of grass. I heard of no other name for them than the local one of *zacateros*, from *zacate* (grass); and the Mexicans assert that, if horses or mules swallow these insects, they invariably die.\*

Of bugs and beetles there is endless variety — including the *cocuyo* or lantern-bug, and the *tarantula*.

Of reptiles those most frequently met with are the rattlesnake and copper-head, both of which are poisonous. The scorpion is common all over the republic, and its sting is sometimes fatal to children or persons of inflammable temperament. The chameleon abounds in the plains, a grotesque, but harmless and inoffensive animal. It always

\* Since writing the above, I find that this insect is noticed in Clavigero, who calls it, on the authority of Hernandez, *quauhmeatl*, a Mexican name: therefore it is probable that it is also found in Southern Mexico.

assimilates its color to that of the soil where it is found. The chameleon is the "horned frog" of the prairies of America.

The characteristic shrub on the plains of Chihuahua is the mesquite — a species of acacia, which grows to the height of ten or twelve feet. The seeds, contained in a small pod, resemble those of the laburnum, and are used by the Apaches to make a kind of bread or cake, which is sweet and pleasant to the taste. The wood is exceedingly hard and heavy.\* This constantly recurring and ugly shrub becomes quite an eyesore to the traveller passing the mesquite-covered plains, as it is the only thing in the shape of a tree seen for hundreds of miles, excepting here and there a solitary alamo or willow, which overhangs a spring, and which invariably gives a name to the rancho or hacienda which may generally be found in the vicinity of water. Thus day after day I passed the ranchos of El Sauz, Los Sauzes, Los Sauzillos — the willow, the willows, the little willows — or El Alamos, Los Alamitos — the poplar, the little poplars. The last is the only timber found on the streams in Northern Mexico, and on the Del Norte and the Arkansas it grows to a great size.

Chihuahua at this time was in a state of con-

\* From the mesquite exudes a resin resembling gum Arabic.

siderable ferment, on account of the anticipated advance of the Americans upon the city from New Mexico. That department had been occupied by them without opposition, Governor Armijo and his three thousand heroes scattering before the barbarians of the north, as they please to call the Americans, without firing a shot. A body of troops had now advanced to the borders of the department, and were known to be encamped on the Rio del Norte, at the entrance of the "Jornada del Muerto"—the deadman's journey—a tract of desert, without wood or water, which extends nearly one hundred miles across a bend of the river; and a journey across which is dreaded by the Mexicans, not only on account of these natural difficulties, but from the fact of its being the haunt of numerous bands of Apaches, who swoop down from the sierras upon travellers, who, with their exhausted animals, have but little chance of escape.

In the rear of the American troops was the long-expected *caravana* of upwards of two hundred wagons, destined for Chihuahua and the fair of San Juan. These, entering Santa Fé with the troops, had of course paid no duty in that port of entry, and it was a great object with the Governor of Chihuahua that they should proceed to that city and pay the usual duties to him, which other-



wise would have been payable to the customhouse of Santa Fé. The government being entirely without funds, and anxious to raise and equip a body of troops to oppose the advance of the Americans, the arrival of the caravan would have been most opportune, since, at the usual rate of duties, viz. 500 dollars for each wagon, the amount to be received by the government would exceed 100,000 dollars.

However, the merchants, particularly the Americans, were reluctant to trust their property to the chances of Mexican honor, not knowing how they might be treated under the present circumstances of war: and having neglected to profit by the permission of General Kearney, who then commanded the United States troops, to proceed to their destination; now, that that officer had advanced to California, and the command had devolved on another, they were ordered to remain in the rear of the troops, and not to advance excepting under their escort. The commanding officer deemed it imprudent to allow such an amount of the sinews of war to be placed in the hands of the enemy, to be used against the Americans. That this was very proper under the circumstances there could be no gainsaying, but at the same time there was a very large amount of property belonging to English merchants and others of neutral nations, who were

suffering enormous losses by the detention of their goods; and as no official notification had been given of the *blockade* of the frontier town of Santa Fé, this prohibition to proceed was considered unjust and arbitrary. My opinion, however, is, that the officer in command of the United States troops was perfectly justified in the course he pursued, knowing well the uses to which the money thus obtained would have been applied.

In order to keep the enemy in ignorance of the state of affairs in Chihuahua, no one had been permitted to leave the state for some months; and when it was known that I had received a *carte blanche* from Don Angel Trias, the Governor, to proceed where I pleased, I was from this circumstance invested with all kinds of official dignities by the population. As it was known that I was the bearer of sundry despatches from the Governor to the Americans, I was immediately voted to be *commissionado* on the part of the Mexican government to treat for peace, or I was *un coronel Yngles*, bound to Oregon to settle the difference respecting that disputed territory. The mysterious fact of an Englishman travelling through the country at such a time, and being permitted to proceed "*al norte*," which permission their most influential citizens had been unable to obtain, was sufficient to put the curious on the *qui-vive*; and

when on the morning of my departure an escort of soldiers was seen drawn up at my door, I was immediately promoted to be "somebody."

This escort — save the mark! — consisted of two or three dragoons of the regiment of Vera Cruz, which had been several years in Santa Fé, but had run away with the Governor on the approach of the Americans, and were now stationed at Chihuahua. Their horses — wretched, half-starved animals — were borrowed for the occasion; and the men, refusing to march without some provision for the road, were advanced their "*sueldo*" by a patriotic merchant of the town, who gave each a handful of copper coins, which they carefully tied up in the corners of their sarapes. Their dress was original and uniform (in rags). One had on a dirty broad-brimmed straw hat, another a handkerchief tied round his head. One had a portion of a jacket, another was in his shirt-sleeves, with overalls, open to the winds, reaching a little below the knees. All were bootless and unspurred. One had a rusty sword and lance, another a gun without a hammer, the third a bow and arrows. Although the nights were piercingly cold, they had but one wretched, tattered sarape of the commonest kind between them, and no rations of any description.

These were regulars of the regiment of Vera

Cruz. I may as well here mention that, two or three months after, Colonel Doniphan, with 900 volunteers, marched through the state of Chihuahua, defeating on one occasion 3000 Mexicans with great slaughter, and taking the city itself, without *losing one man* in the campaign.

At Sacramento the Mexicans entrenched themselves behind formidable breastworks, having ten or twelve pieces of artillery in battery, and numbering at least 3000. Will it be believed that these miserable creatures were driven from their position, and slaughtered like sheep, by 900 raw backwoodsmen, who did not lose *one single man* in the encounter? \*

\* So reported at the time. The Mexicans in fact lost some three hundred killed, about the same number wounded, and forty were taken prisoners. Colonel Doniphan had one man killed and eight wounded, several of them mortally. (Ed.)

THE END





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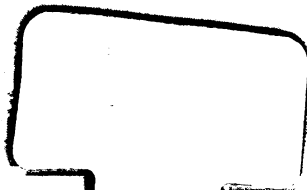
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